3 1761 08110093 5

LD DAYS AND NEW

LORD ERNEST HAMILTON

Presented to
The Library
of the
University of Toronto
by
the Estate of
Dr. Frederick C. Harrison

OLD DAYS AND NEW

FORTY YEARS ON

By LORD ERNEST HAMILTON

"A more agreeable book of memoirs than this by Lord Ernest Hamilton we have not for a long time read. It is free from all errors of taste; it is generous in appreciation, lively and well told, always interesting, and written with considerable skill."—*Daily Telegraph.*

"Lord Ernest Hamilton's Victorian people are convincingly alive, and none the less that they seem of a period hundreds of years removed."—*Times.*

"Victorian memoirs fascinatingly written, reaching back to the sixties of the last century. Full of lively anecdotes bearing upon the social, military, political, and sporting life of the period."—*Weekly Dispatch.*

"A book which harvests many interesting memories and serves them up with freshness and charm."—*Evening Standard.*

"Lord Ernest Hamilton's delightful book of reminiscences."—*Morning Post.*

"Lord Ernest's memoirs are extremely entertaining."—*Yorkshire Post.*

"We may merely reiterate our gratitude to Lord Ernest for his most attractive volume, and recommend it with every confidence to our readers."—*Church Times.*

HODDER & STOUGHTON, LTD.
PUBLISHERS, LONDON, E.C. 4

Photo: Claude Harris, Ltd.

The Author.

OLD DAYS AND NEW

BY

LORD ERNEST HAMILTON

AUTHOR OF "FORTY YEARS ON"

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

Made and Printed in Great Britain.
Richard Clay & Sons, Limited,
Printers, Bungay, Suffolk.

DA
565
H18A32
1923

LIBRARY
DEC 8 1963
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
873103

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	GREAT-GRANDMAMMA	9
II.	DON MAGNIFICO	23
III.	"LAURA, LAURA, FREDERICK'S COME"	43
IV.	MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF YE ENGLISH	62
V.	NOW AND THEN	82
VI.	FROM JOSHUA TO JOHN	94
VII.	STRANGE PHANTOM SHAPES OF YORE	104
VIII.	STET FORTUNA DOMUS	114
IX.	SOME THOUGHTS OF EATON HALL	131
X.	THE RAUMA	146
XI.	SNOWDON, ETC.	163
XII.	OPERA AND PLAY	184
XIII.	TALES OF KENSINGTON BARRACKS	205
XIV.	PRESS PRICKINGS	228
XV.	GLAMIS CASTLE	246
XVI.	WILTON	263
XVII.	THE HUN IN HUNLAND	272
XVIII.	THE BORDER COUNTRY	283
XIX.	THE RAID OF CARLISLE	296
XX.	AFTER-YEARS	315

CHAPTER I

GREAT-GRANDMAMMA

The title of this book is not, as some might suppose, intended to suggest any inquisitorial pryings into the manners and customs, virtues or shortcomings of remote ancestry. The "old days" are not very old days, for of these we really know very little. The distant mist which hangs around them blurs their outline so that they come down to us as very hazy pictures and are by so much the less interesting. We may read as many Memoirs as we will of Elizabethan days and of Jacobean days and even of early Georgian days, but I doubt greatly whether the impressions left on our minds by these Memoirs is, in the very smallest degree, like the real thing. We get an indistinct impression of externals, but of the underwear we get never so much as a glimpse, and perhaps it is as well. We can reproduce Lady Castlemaine and the Duchess of Richmond from Lely's canvasses and Anthony Hamilton's tales, but what do we know of the real behind-the-scenes life of these people or of the true conditions of Society in the days when Charles II bred spaniels in his bedroom at Whitehall and borrowed half-crowns from his Chamberlain?

Those distant days are buried beyond the reach of the spade, and to dig for them is a wearisome and unprofitable task. But, when we come down to the latter days of good King George III, we begin to see a little more clearly. We get a fairly clear view of the powdered, patched, wigged, quilted and flounced ladies who minced and swooned and cried "La!" at the sight of the rollicking beaus and dandies in their blue, brass-buttoned, swallow-tailed coats and heavily frilled shirt-fronts. We are getting nearer home when we get to these bucks and beauties of the pre-Revolution days and even nearer still when we get to the early days of the nineteenth century. Some of the marionettes who frisked and jerked about on life's stage in these days of the later Georges were even our own progenitors in the third or fourth degree, which seems to bring them within the bounds of more or less reasonable relationship. Anyone beyond the fourth degree seems to be almost outside these bounds. We may take a perfunctory interest, as ancestors, in these people who bore our name two hundred years ago, and, in some cases, we may even feel a certain pride in their achievements, good, bad or indifferent; but it is difficult to look upon them as relations. They are too far off and too indistinct.

When, however, we draw down to the days of great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers it is different. There is a homely ring about these names which seems to lift them right out of the common herd of peruked and lace-collared ancestors into our near domestic circle. We no longer think of them as the third earl or the wife of the fifth baronet, but as great-grandpapa and great-grandmamma. We can even trace back to them some of the personal peculiarities of which we are ourselves conscious. The common inheritance of these peculiarities gives us a fellow-feeling, and we regard even their shortcomings with a sympathetic eye.

It would be outside all reason to imagine that these more or less remote relatives of ours can prove as interesting to others as they are to ourselves, nor do I cherish any such fond illusion with regard to the two great-grandparents of my own whom I propose to pass in quick review before those whose eyes may fall upon these pages. But it does so happen that, entirely outside any question of family interest, fate has endowed me with two great-grandparents—one on the father's side and one on the mother's—who were, in their own day, conspicuous and much-discussed public characters and who are therefore interesting, even to the outside world, as types of Society one hundred and twenty years or so ago.

When memory has the misfortune to be long enough to span half the distance between George III and George V, it has at least the compensating advantage of affording a stepping-stone from which the retrospector (if indeed there be such a word) may scan more closely the other and unknown half. From the half-way house, from the sign-board of which the portrait of Queen Victoria in her meridian gazes coldly down, we may look back, on the one hand, to the Fannys, Charlottes, and Harriets of the early nineteenth century and forward, on the other, to the Sybils, Daphnes and Irises of to-day and, from our post of vantage between the two, we are in a position to draw comparisons, favourable or unfavourable as the case may be.

The men offer sharper contrasts than the women, that is to say, there seems to be a wider gap between Reggie and his great-grandfather than there is between Daphne and her great-grandmother. The Duke of to-day is but a pale shadow of what the Georgian Duke was. He is a better fellow, perhaps, and more of a gentleman, but, as a mere radiator of urban and sylvan splendour, he is not to be mentioned in the same breath as his great-grandfather who gambled away his patrimony at Crockford's and drank himself nightly under the table in silk stockings and the full insignia of the Garter. A Duke was a Duke in those days, and looked down from his haughty eminence upon an Earl, who, in turn, looked down upon a Viscount; and they were all addressed as "my lord" by baronets and squires and other inferior persons who now slap them on the back and call them "Bill."

The two relations to whom I, personally, am able to look back with more or less pride and certainly with undiluted interest are my great-grandmother Jane, Duchess of Gordon and my great-grandfather John James, ninth Earl and first Marquis of Abercorn. Both of these forbears of mine were, beyond doubt, remarkable personalities in their own particular way, the latter on account of the amazing magnificence of his person and establishment and the former because of her beauty, fearlessness of action, and originality of thought. The lady naturally claims our first consideration.

"Jennie of Monreith" was the second daughter of Sir William Maxwell of Monreith in Wigtonshire. She and her two sisters were all accounted great beauties and, judging from the three portraits of them by Romney, now in possession of Sir Herbert Maxwell, the claim was fully justified. They were all three, according to their portraits, extremely good-looking, but it is to be assumed that, by her contemporaries, Jane was accounted the greatest beauty of the three, for she was commonly known as "the Flower of Galloway." In any event she completely overshadowed both her sisters in animation and vivacity, as indeed she did most other people, and of her fearlessness and originality of outlook she gave early and sufficient proof in the streets of Edinburgh where she and her younger sister Eglantine (afterwards Lady Wallace) introduced the so-far neglected sport of pig-riding. Little Jennie and Eglantine were, of course, mere children at the time when their superfluous energy found relief in this unusual exercise. The probability is that they were very small children, for it is fairly obvious that no one of even half-grown dimensions could ride a pig. One of the children used to jump on the pig's back while the other guided and encouraged the expostulating porker with a long stick. Apparently they only rode down the Wynds as far as Prince's Street and there dismounted. It is just as well to publish to the world the real truth about this pig-riding business, as the prevalent idea seems to be that Jane, after she was Duchess of Gordon, frequently and solemnly rode a pig through the streets of Edinburgh for the edification of the populace.

The taste for pig-riding seems to have deserted little Jane at a very early age, and her maidenhood would appear to have been quite uneventful up to the age of eighteen, when she married the young Duke of Gordon, who was six years her senior, and settled down to the quiet domestic life of a wife and mother. There is no doubt that she was immensely admired when she first made her appearance as a married woman in Society. Pryse Gordon, in his memoirs, writes that, in 1775, that is to say six years after her marriage, "she was unquestionably the most beautiful and fascinating woman in Great Britain."

The first twenty-two years of the Duchess's married life may be said to have passed off uneventfully, and it was not till she was forty that the combination of circumstances arose out of which she emerged with such immortal celebrity. In 1790 her son, the Marquis of Huntly, raised a company of the Black Watch, and in defiance of the laws which, since the Battle of Culloden, had made it a penal offence to wear tartan, dressed his company in kilts. Not content with this rather daring step, he himself, shortly afterwards, had the temerity to appear at Court in a kilt of the Black Watch tartan, apparently without bringing down on his head any very terrible penalties at the hands of the House of Hanover.

The Duchess was herself, of course, a Lowland Scot, if ever there was one. Her upbringing had been partly in Wigtonshire and partly in Edinburgh. However, she had married the greatest Highlander in the land and, as his wife, she flung herself into the cause of tartans, sporrans and bagpipes with all that tremendous energy and enthusiasm of which she was capable. Fired by her son's example, she now resolved to go even one better. She had a silk dress of the same tartan made for herself at Spitalfields and appeared in it at a Drawing Room, thereby creating an absolutely unparalleled sensation. It must be borne in mind, in reflecting on her action, that at the close of the eighteenth century tartan was a thing of the very meanest reputation. The House of Hanover, as may be supposed, looked upon it, or were supposed to look upon it, with feelings of undisguised nausea. The Whigs detested it as the emblem of the Jacobites, and the smart lords and ladies of Society looked down upon it as the distinguishing mark of bare-legged savages. A lady of the Court would as soon have thought of appearing with a ring through her nose as of wearing anything so barbaric as a strip of tartan. The Duchess's venture, therefore, was little less daring than if a member of the Dail Eireann were to take his seat on St. Patrick's day in a full suit of orange. Contrary to general expectation, however, the King took this flaunting in his face of irritant colours most philosophically, and, encouraged by his good-humoured tolerance, a number of others quickly followed the Duchess's example. In a very short time, the wearing of tartan became the rage of London, and the Spitalfields weavers were kept working at the highest possible pressure in order to cope with the incessant demand. Ladies wore dresses, scarves, stockings, sashes and petticoats of tartan, while the men affected waistcoats of the same striking material. The fashion quickly spread to Paris, where the rage for tartan was even greater than in London; and the climax was finally reached when the Duchess of Cumberland—bearing a name which will always be bracketed sanguinarily with that of Culloden—herself appeared in all the gaudy panoply of a complete tartan dress. As the Duchess was an extremely handsome woman, with a very fine figure, her enlistment in the ranks of the clans created a sensation little inferior to that caused by my great-grandmother's first appearance in the forbidden colours.

Flushed by the amazing success of her first Caledonian innovation, the Duchess next directed her energies toward the introduction of reels and other step-dances into London Society, where even waltzes and quadrilles were as yet unknown, and where such wild romps as the dances of the Highlands were absolutely unheard of. Her success was just as rapid and pronounced in this second venture as in the first. According to Wraxall, the Duchess herself and all her daughters were most beautiful and graceful dancers, besides being the possessors of various other external attractions.

"When the daughters all appeared together," he writes, "in a box at the opera or in a theatre with their mother, their extraordinary attractiveness became the source of universal admiration." Their dancing prowess was first exhibited at Almack's to the music of an imported Scotch orchestra conducted by the famous Neil Gow, and so artistically did the mother and daughters execute their reels that the whole of London Society was infected with the craving to spring into the air and shout "Hech!" with the same grace and agility as these fair Aberdonians.

It cannot be otherwise than gratifying for a great-grandson—and indeed I may truly come a generation closer and say a grandson, for one of the fair dancing daughters was my grandmother—to be able to place on record the fact, as to which there is very general testimony, that the dancing efforts of the Duchess and her daughters were in a great measure responsible for killing, or at all events "scotching," the then prevalent vice of gambling. For it appears that, with the agile and enthusiastic help of the Jenkins, father and son, they created such a rage for dancing that men began to find that more pleasure was to be got out of flinging a reel with the gay Gordons than in losing all their money at White's or Crockford's.

However, for the moment we may leave great-grandmamma, grandmamma and my four great-aunts footing it merrily at Almack's, while we turn our enquiring eye upon the Duchess's most famous exploit, which unquestionably was the raising of the Gordon Highlanders. At the time when she set out on this undertaking there was no such thing as a Gordon tartan in existence, for the country of the Gordons was not held to be, strictly speaking, in "the Highlands," which, as even the semi-educated Sassenach probably knows, is not a geographical term, but one which literally signifies the high lands, *i. e.*, the mountains. However, what were such academic distinctions to our enterprising Duchess? Any regiment which she had a hand in raising was going to be a Highland regiment and to wear a bonnie, braw tartan of its own. In this highly commendable spirit she sought the collaboration of a sympathetic clothier in Huntly, and, as a result of their combined efforts, the present Gordon tartan was evolved, which is, of course, nothing more than the Black Watch tartan glorified with a yellow skeleton check.

The next business clearly was to give the regiment which was to wear the tartan a name worthy of it. The first three regiments which the Duke of Gordon had been called upon to raise off his estates had been distinguished by the unbecoming and ignoble title of the "Northern Fencibles." In 1794 he was ordered to raise yet another regiment. The undertaking seemed an impossible one, for the country had been already practically drained dry of young men. Furthermore, there was no enthusiasm in the country for the service. Culloden was not forgotten and the House of Hanover was still held in patriotic abhorrence by the peasantry of Aberdeenshire. Only eleven young men were found ready to volunteer for service in the fourth regiment of Northern Fencibles. Then it was that, with Lord Huntly in absolute despair, his mother and sisters came forward and volunteered their services as recruiting-sergeants. Dressed in the newly created Gordon tartan, they scoured the country in all directions in search of strong and hardy young men who were amenable to the persuasion of fair lips. By this division of labour the whole of north-east Scotland was canvassed. Lady

Madeline, the second daughter, even travelled as far north as Thurso in the zeal of her quest for recruits. The country lads were told that they were no longer to be mere common Fencibles, but gay Gordon Highlanders, wearing the same chaste but decorative tartan which the Duchess and her daughters were now so effectively displaying on their own handsome persons. When all other arts of persuasion failed, it is said that both the Duchess and Lady Madeline placed guineas between their lips and challenged the stand-off lads in the market-place to come and take them with their lips. Many accepted the challenge, but to their honour be it recorded that, in the majority of cases, they threw the guinea to the crowd, saying that a kiss from the Duchess or one of her daughters was quite reward enough by itself.

In this way was the famous 92nd regiment of Gordon Highlanders enlisted and endowed with its inimitable tartan; and, as is only fitting in the case of a regiment raised with such tremendous ardour and—one may almost say—self-sacrifice, the reputation which it has consistently maintained for valour in the face of the enemy can challenge comparison with that of any other regiment in the service.

As to the method said to have been practised, in the last resort, by the Duchess and her daughters in order to raise a regiment worthy of the King's needs, it must be remembered that such practices were by no means unusual in the days of George III, for is it not on record in the Chronicles of Long Acre that Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, secured for Charles Fox the solid vote of that plebeian thoroughfare by offering her fair mouth to its beery denizens? It was nothing accounted of in the days of George III. The kiss of a Duchess, and especially of a very handsome Duchess, was considered good and sufficient exchange not only for a vote, but even for a wound, for when one of the Gordon Highlanders lay wounded and groaning on the battlefield at the Adour, a comrade reminded him of the kiss which the Duchess had given him, and his groaning ceased. He felt that he had been well paid for his wound.

On the whole I am inclined to be rather proud of my great-grandmother. There can be no doubt that, apart from all other considerations, she was of an extraordinarily lovable disposition. We get testimony to this effect from every quarter. Miss Grant of Rothiemurcus, who was a close neighbour of hers in Scotland, wrote of her that "her sallies of wit enlivened the table; her precepts and example animated the ball-room. She was peculiarly skilled and successful in gladdening life and in diffusing delightful feelings."

This last sentence leads me to the belief that the Duchess must have had many points in common with her granddaughter, who was my mother. It is probable in the extreme that the famous Jennie of Monreith actually held my mother in her arms before she died, for the Duchess of Bedford, who was my mother's mother, was her youngest and favourite daughter. It is also of distinct interest to me, as a descendant, to note how Jennie's dancing talent descended even to the third generation; for my mother in her youth was famed for her graceful step-dancing and, as a child, was several times called upon to perform tambourine-dances before George IV and William IV, from both of whom she gained much noisy applause. I think that the grandmother and granddaughter must have been alike in many other respects and especially in their unquenchable *joie de vivre* and in the diffusion of the "delightful feelings" of which Miss Grant speaks; in the adoration in which they were held by all the lower orders with whom they came in contact, and in the love of the simple life which was so strong in both of them. In London the Duchess of Gordon was the acknowledged leader of fashion, completely eclipsing by her superior animation and vivacity the two rival Duchesses of Rutland and Devonshire. These were both six or seven years her junior, but the Duchess of Rutland—although very beautiful—was too stupid to exercise any great influence on Society, and the poor amiable and gracious Duchess of Devonshire (Gainsborough's) was prematurely cut off by death at the height of her popularity. The Duchess of Gordon, then, reigned supreme. "If," writes Dr. Bulloch, "the fourth Duke of Gordon was rightly described as the greatest subject in Britain, his consort could, with even greater justification, be called the greatest lady."

Yet among the hills and glens of Aberdeenshire this great lady's life was of the very simplest. After she had successfully married off her five daughters, she retired to a small farmhouse at Kinrara, where she lived the simplest life imaginable in the most perfect contentment. She no doubt felt that, her duty to her family having now been accomplished, she was at liberty to enjoy herself to her heart's content over gardening and poultry-farming and other pastoral pursuits of the kind. With the settlement of her daughters in life she had indeed every reason to feel satisfied, for, out of the five, she had succeeded in marrying three to Dukes. Elizabeth, the eldest, married the Duke of Richmond; Susan, the third, married the Duke of Manchester, and Georgiana, the fifth, who was my grandmother, married the Duke of Bedford. Louisa, the fourth daughter, was also within measurable distance of imitating her sisters, for she was engaged to Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford, but he died and Louisa had to be content herself with the Marquis Cornwallis, while her younger sister married the next Duke of Bedford. Before this happened, however, I had narrowly escaped being a Frenchman, for the match-making Duchess very nearly succeeded in marrying my grandmother to Prince Eugène Beauharnais. Mercifully, however, Napoleon put his foot down and vetoed the marriage, whereupon matters took the course already described.

Justly satisfied then with these matrimonial exploits, the Duchess retired to her cottage at Kinrara, which lay near the high-road between Perth and Inverness and about thirty miles from the latter place. Round this cottage and running down to the glen below, she fashioned a delightful wild garden, the forerunner, no doubt, of the modern rock-garden. To the perfecting of this garden she devoted the whole of her spare time. "She rose at five," writes Miss Grant of Rothiemurcus, "and bustled about all day, employing thirty labourers." But her main aim in life, from the marriage of her last daughter to the day of her death, was the improvement and care of the surrounding poor, who, from the tenor of her many letters on the subject, would appear to have been very sorely in need of such care and improvement. The whole of her untiring energy was thrown into this great work, and the results which she achieved appear to have been very far-reaching. After a day of labour among the peasantry she would often find relaxation in the old dancing spirit. "A few candles lighted up the bare walls; fiddles and whiskey punch were always on hand and gentles and simples reeled away in company."

The Duchess died in the Pulteney Hotel, Piccadilly, at the age of sixty-four. Her coffin was drawn by six jet-black Belgian horses the whole way from London to Kinrara, where she was buried amidst the peaceful and romantic scenery that she loved so well.

CHAPTER II

DON MAGNIFICO

ALTHOUGH my paternal great-grandfather could not, strictly speaking, lay claim to be reckoned, on all points, an exemplary character, he was, beyond question, an interesting one, and, as he was one of the most prominent social figures of the latter half of George III's reign, I am emboldened to introduce him to a world that as yet knows him not—probably even by name. But he is worth knowing for this reason, if for no other, that—even in his own day—he stood for an extinct species, being in fact one of the few surviving specimens of those inflexible pre-Revolution aristocrats who looked upon the toilers of the world as dirt, and one who, if called upon to do so, would have climbed the guillotine steps without a tremor of the eyelid, withered the howling mob below with his scornful eye and given the executioner a princely bribe to put on white kid gloves before pinioning his hands, so that no plebeian touch should fall upon his noble wrists. It is a strange thing that a man with so compelling a personality and one so tremendously discussed in his own day should have dropped almost completely out of history, but the explanation lies, no doubt, in the fact that he took no prominent part in politics. The politician—no matter how despised and execrated he may be in his own day, and no matter how insignificant a personality he may be outside politics—lives for ever in the history of his country; but the mere social star sinks below the horizon when his day is done and reappears no more. So it was with John James Hamilton. He had his baptism of politics, for he was originally a member of Parliament and—according to Pitt—the best orator of his day, but he was frankly bored with the whole business, and, after he had reached the House of Lords, held himself superbly aloof from the acrimonious debates which were such a feature of the long duel between Pitt and Fox.

John James Hamilton was nephew and heir to the eighth Earl of Abercorn and was educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he formed a lifelong friendship with William Pitt. In addition to the remarkable oratorical powers to which Pitt bears testimony, he was gifted with a strikingly handsome person, immense physical strength, and a will so domineering that Kings, Queens and Prime Ministers, to say nothing of the ordinary ruck of men and women, bent before it as rushes bend before the Borealic blast. As far as available records go, he never failed in any purpose to which he set his mind—either with men or women. Such a man, even though open to certain reproaches which no biographical skill can push entirely out of sight, is still deserving of commemoration or, at any rate, of a certain amount of posthumous notice at the hands of a generation whose ways are not what his ways were.

For the majority of the following facts I am indebted to the researches of my cousin the late Lady Baillie Hamilton, who drew them up in book form without ever publishing them to the world.

John James Hamilton, who from the day that he came of age was allowed £4,000 a year by his uncle, was lionised by Society from the moment that he alighted in its midst from Cambridge, partly because of his own remarkable personality and partly because he was known to be heir to what was, in those days, considered an immense fortune. He had, however, to wait until he was thirty-three before his uncle died and the opportunity was his to break out into that display of magnificent hospitality which made him the most conspicuous figure in the Society of his day. Before this happened he had married a very lovely lady in the person of Miss Catherine Copley, whose portrait by Romney shows her to have had dark auburn hair, a faultless complexion and an expression of wonderful sweetness. It is not too much to say that, throughout their married life, her conduct, as his consort, was as exemplary as his was the reverse. She died at the age of thirty-two, leaving him five very beautiful children, none of whom lived to reach their mother's age. Before her death, however, her husband had become the ninth Earl of Abercorn and had succeeded to a large income and £200,000 in ready money. These advantages—great as they were—appeared to the new Earl to fall far short of his merits, and, within three years of his succession, he had persuaded Pitt to make him a Marquis and a Knight of the Garter. Then it was, with the blue ribbon stretched across his spotless waistcoat, that he began to blaze forth in his true magnificence. His first wife had died and he proposed to fill her place with his cousin, Miss Cecil Hamilton, a young lady who had been resident in his house for some time and whom everyone agreed that he ought to marry. The new Marquis, however, saw one insuperable difficulty standing in the way. As plain Mr. Hamilton he had been quite content to marry plain Miss Copley, but as Marquis of Abercorn and a Knight of the Garter he found it quite impossible to demean himself by marrying anyone who had not the distinction of a title. He accordingly summoned the Prime Minister and told him that, in order to enable him to do the right thing, he must procure from the King the rank of an Earl's daughter for his intended bride, Miss Hamilton. Pitt, little liking his job, agreed to do his best, but, as was only to be expected, the King stubbornly refused his request on the grounds that there was absolutely no precedent for such an extraordinary step. On receiving news of this the infuriated Marquis called on George III in person and so terrified the poor monarch by his dictatorial manner that, before the audience closed, he had extracted a promise that everything should be as the Marquis wished. Pitt once more saw the King, the whole matter was satisfactorily arranged and Lord Abercorn married the Lady Cecil Hamilton under the pretence that she was an Earl's daughter, although everyone, including the bridegroom, knew that she was no more than a parson's daughter. Pitt gave the bride away.

When asked how he could possibly have been a party to such an outrageous demand, the Prime Minister replied that " he considered himself lucky to be let off so cheaply, for Lord Abercorn looked so menacing and so big with an important demand that he thought he meant to ask for the Elector's vote for the Empire."

This second marriage turned out badly, for Lady Abercorn shortly afterwards ran away with Captain Copley, who was the brother of her predecessor. The Marquis divorced her and began looking about for No. 3 as, with his ambitions as a dispenser of splendid hospitality, a wife was an official necessity to his establishment.

His third selection startled the world even more than his second had done, for he chose the Lady Anne Hatton, who was a widow and the daughter of the Earl of Arran, and whose reputation as a woman fell little short of what her prospective husband's did as a man. It was freely prophesied that the third Lady Abercorn would not be accepted by London Society and that the Marquis would unquestionably ruin his social prospects by making such an ill-advised marriage. Nothing can illustrate the grave view which Society took of the situation better than the action of the Queen. She sent Lady Ely to command the attendance at Buckingham House of Miss Copley, who—since the first Lady Abercorn's death—had constantly lived under Lord Abercorn's roof in order to play the mother to her nieces, but who was inclined to take flight in face of the invasion of so notorious a lady as the new Marchioness. "I hear," the Queen said, "that in consequence of this wretched business you intend quitting Lord Abercorn's house. But remember, Miss Copley, that, the worse the affair is, the stronger is the necessity for your remaining with your nieces."

After this, of course, Miss Copley had no alternative but to stay; but the discredited establishment and the cold shoulder of Society and the other calamities which the world had foreseen as the result of this undesirable alliance proved, in the event, to be the merest bogies. The irresistible personality of Lord Abercorn carried everything before it, as it always did. Within three months of the Queen's condemnation of his conduct, he and his new wife were entertaining royalty, and it was not long before the Queen herself accepted the hospitality of the lady whose marriage with Lord Abercorn she had looked upon as such an overwhelming calamity. In fact, it may truly be said that it was not until after his third marriage that Lord Abercorn really began to earn the title of Don Magnifico by which he was thenceforward universally known in Society. All his previous efforts in the direction of splendid entertainment had been mere child's play by comparison with those with which he now set to work to dazzle the world. Within three months of his third marriage, which everyone had predicted would pitch him irretrievably into the social gutter, he and the new Lady Abercorn gave a ball at their London House, No. 7 Grosvenor Square, which was attended by the Prince of Wales and the Duchesses of Gloucester and Cumberland.

The *Morning Post* of May 3rd, 1800, describes the entertainment in language which we cannot doubt was highly gratifying to the host and which we can only suppose faithfully reflects the immeasurable vulgarity of the age. " In the dining-room were placed six round tables for parties of twelve; in the eating-room below seven tables for the same number, and in the parlour a long table for sixty. At half after one o'clock supper was announced. It was a hot supper and served up in plate and china of great beauty. No framework was used, but branched lights in magnificent silver candlesticks supplied the place. Turtle soup was generally introduced and French beans and asparagus were among the novelties of the season. It was a quarter past five before the company separated. The Duchesses of Gloucester and of Cumberland and the Prince of Wales went away before supper. H.S.H. the Stadtholder supped at the same table with the Marchioness of Abercorn, the Marchioness of Bath, the Countess of Harrington, and Lady Malmesbury. The Marchioness looked divinely and did the honours of the table with all the grace and elegance peculiar to herself."

We further learn from the same source that the Duchess of Gordon was present at this ball but did not dance, but her daughter, Lady Georgiana Gordon (who was my grandmother) danced reels and strathspeys with Lord Dalkeith.

My great-grandfather, whom I will henceforth allude to as the "Old Marquis"—which is the title by which he is universally known in the family—gave three more balls in London that season, all of which were attended by the Prince of Wales.

A year later his career as an entertainer of the great received a temporary check, for while driving his wife and daughter in a two-horse phaeton at Bentley Priory the horses bolted going down the Stanmore Hill. To obtain a better purchase the Old Marquis stood up in the phaeton and pulled with all his force on the reins. So great was his muscular strength that both reins snapped like wool and he was shot out backwards into the road, breaking both his legs in the fall. The phaeton pursued its wild career to the bottom of the hill, where it upset, but neither of the two ladies was much injured. As soon as they were able, they made their way back to the scene of the accident and found the Old Marquis lying by the side of the road, quite unconcerned.

"Both my legs are broken," he said in answer to their inquiries, "but they will soon mend." He was carried in a litter to the Priory and there his legs were set—and very well set—by the local doctor, but, as a precaution, a coach and six was sent post-haste off to London to bring back the three best surgeons of the day. The only thing about the accident that worried the Old Marquis was as to whether his personal grace and beauty of form would be in any way impaired. He asked the local practitioner whether he thought there would be any after-effects. "Well, my lord," replied the imprudent man, "at your time of life you can hardly expect to escape without any consequences."

To this remark the Old Marquis made no reply, but, on the day following, the local doctor received a handsome fee accompanied by an intimation that his services were no longer required. In some distress of mind he asked Dr. Pemberton, one of the London specialists who had been sent for, what he could have said or done to offend his noble patient, and repeated the conversation which had passed between them. "Well," said Dr. Pemberton drily, "if you referred to his Lordship's age, you were lucky to get any fee at all. No one must even suggest that he is not still in his first youth."

The doctor's prophecy proved true, for the Old Marquis, who was forty-five at the time of the accident, ever afterwards walked with a limp. In all other respects his energies were in no way abated, and, on his first appearance in public after the accident—which was at a ball given by the Duke of Cumberland—the King congratulated him on having escaped so lightly out of the doctor's hands.

The Old Marquis's three daughters by his first wife were now growing up. They were all extremely beautiful, and, in their honour, a series of magnificent entertainments was given by their father at Bentley Priory, Stanmore. This house, originally a Tudor Priory, had been bought by a Mr. Duberly, who rebuilt it at great expense and resold it in 1788 to the Old Marquis, who, in turn, spent immense sums in enlarging and beautifying the place. By the beginning of the nineteenth century it had become one of the most palatial residences in the kingdom. In January, 1803, a great theatrical performance was given there, of which Sir Thomas Lawrence, who was one of the Old Marquis's special protégés, writes as follows:

"There were three separate dinners—the first for the actors; the second, for which the cloth was laid at four o'clock, for the company who came from town, and the third for the Prince of Wales, who arrived at five and subsequently dined with about twenty who were late for the previous dinner. The billiard-room was the theatre, and, in the centre, a state chair elevated, covered with crimson velvet elegantly embroidered in gold, was placed for the Prince of Wales. Mrs. Kemble was the stage-manager."

The Times adds that "the audience consisted of about 120 persons of the first rank and among the distinguished persons present were the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, the Earl and Countess of Westmorland and the Earl and Countess of Essex."

After the entertainment the family returned to Grosvenor Square, but, at Easter, we learn that the Old Marquis and his family left Grosvenor Square for the Priory in four carriages and four, each of which was preceded by outriders. Almost immediately after their arrival at the Priory the first of a succession of terrible blows fell upon the establishment, for Harriet, the eldest daughter of the house, died after a few days' illness and on the eve of her marriage to the Marquis of Waterford. The cause of death was the same as that which had carried off her mother and which was destined to sweep away, in the next few years, all her brothers and sisters; but that any such disease as consumption should be associated with his family was, to the Old Marquis, an intolerable thought. Five of the most eminent doctors and surgeons in London were summoned to his presence and ordered to write and sign the following most untruthful letter to the Editor of the *Morning Post:*

"Sir,—In your paper of yesterday you have inserted that Lady Harriet Hamilton died of a decline! We beg that you will contradict that assertion as, during the whole progress of her disease, the symptoms were never those that would indicate any such tendency.

C. R. Pemberton, M.D.
D. Pitcairn, M.D.
W. Baillie, M.D.
P. de Bruyn, Surgeon.
E. Bowen, Surgeon."

The only outward sign of grief that the Old Marquis allowed himself to show at the loss of his eldest daughter was that he sold the Grosvenor Square house, which had been so closely associated with her *début*, and migrated to Hampden House, Green Street. For a year he neither gave, nor took part in, any gaieties, but early in the following year we find that he attended a ball at Windsor, given by the King, to which he and Lady Abercorn drove down in a carriage and six, preceded by five outriders.

In the spring of the same year, 1805, the Priory once more burst forth into a blaze of gaiety. A contemporary article in the *Morning Post* on the subject of these gaieties is so staggering in its vulgarity as to be worthy of reproduction.

"It may not be unacceptable to our readers to attempt to give some account of the scene of gaiety which has prevailed in this magnificent château, which has been denominated the Court of Pleasure. At ten o'clock a bell rings for breakfast which is set out in the saloon and dining-room, each apartment more elegantly furnished than the other [a truly amazing feat, the secret of which is not divulged]. They are adorned with every article which taste and fancy can devise and perfumed by the aromatic odour of a thousand different plants and flowers of the finest quality. The breakfast continues until half-past three in the afternoon. The Marquis and his sons, the Lord Hamilton and Master Betty [the famous infant Roscius] are in the habit of amusing themselves on the Serpentine Lake in the garden with rowing a beautiful wherry or fishing for carp or other fresh-water fish.

" Four times in the day, between breakfast and dinner, a lunch is set out. At eight o'clock the company dine. The dinner consists of three courses, all substantial English dishes, with a dessert of pines, strawberries, etc. In the evening there is either a ball, a concert or a card-party. On Monday evening there was a grand musical party, at which the three daughters of the Marquis assisted, Lady Catherine played on a very fine organ in the music-room, Lady Frances [his only child by his second wife] displayed much taste and science on the harp, and Lady Maria evinced great judgment on the piano. The Marquis, who possesses a very fine counter-tenor voice, frequently joins the vocal performances. The evening concludes with an elegant supper at twelve o'clock and about two (the usual hour) the party separates for the night.

" On May 31st, when entertaining the King and Queen, the Princess of Wales, the Duchess of Gloucester and six Royal Dukes, about 120 persons sat down to luncheon. The Royal party were served on gold plate and waited on by ten of the Marquis' servants dressed in a very elegant uniform consisting of a scarlet coat, white kerseymere waistcoat richly embroidered with gold, black silk breeches and white silk stockings."

A year later we come across an even more striking journalistic masterpiece describing the conclusion of a protracted revel which lasted over a month.

" Over 130 persons were present at the Priory, among whom were the French Princes the Dukes of Orleans and Montpensier. The dining-room was fitted as a ball-room and the Lords and Ladies Hamilton danced with admirable grace and precision, while Mr. T. Sheridan and Lady Caher likewise appeared to much advantage. About 4.30 in the morning, the whole of the divertissement concluded, when the company retired to their separate chambers for the night, with their minds fully impressed with admiration and respect for the princely munificence with which they had been, for a month past, entertained at Bentley Priory."

The article concludes with the information that the Priory contained no fewer than eleven reception rooms and fifty-eight bedrooms; and that, during this protracted entertainment, " there were sixteen servants in livery, the upper ones wearing scarlet and gold and the others crimson and silver."

Someone had the courage to ask the old Marquis if he had not copied these from the Royal Liveries.

" No, Sir," replied the haughty host, " it was the livery of the Hamiltons before the house of Brunswick had a servant to put it on."

Archery, we are told, was the chief amusement during the daytime, but in every archery contest the Old Marquis's superiority with the bow was so marked that no one was found to approach him in skill.

Lady Morgan, who was one of the guests at the above-mentioned revel, wrote to a friend:

"No words can give an idea of the extent or splendour of this princely palace. The house is not a house at all, for it looks like a little town, which you will believe when I tell you that 120 persons slept under the roof during the Christmas holidays, without including the under-servants, and that the Marquis and Lord Hamilton have between them nine apartments *en suite* and Lady Abercorn four. The Queen's Chamberlain told me indeed that there is nothing like the whole establishment in England and perhaps—for a subject—in Europe. The Marquis is a very fine gentleman. He is always dressed *en grande tenue* and never sits down to table except in his blue ribbon with the Star and Garter."

Wraxall adds the information that he invariably shot in his blue ribbon.

When this remarkable ancestor of mine travelled with his family and establishment, the transit was accomplished by means of four or five carriages and four, preceded by a number of outriders. Our old friend the *Morning Post* tells us that: "The recent journey of the Marquis of Abercorn and his family [from Barons Court in Ulster to London] was marked with that degree of *éclat* which characterises the travelling of the ancient nobility of England. The *suite* consisted of thirty-three persons. The cavalcade was composed of four carriages and ten outriders. They were nearly a month on their journey."

The outriders on such occasions were grooms and footmen whose business it was to go on ahead of the carriages and have everything ready at the inns at which the party proposed to stay. Lockhart, in his "Life of Scott," relates a story told him by Sir Walter Scott which corroborates the *Morning Post's* description of the Old Marquis's mode of travelling. Scott was a great friend and, to a certain extent, an admirer of the Old Marquis, with whom he frequently stayed at the Priory and to whom he dedicated his *Lady of the Lake*. Scott was staying with the Duke of Buccleuch at Drumlanrig when he learned that the Old Marquis was on the road from London to the North and he at once set out to meet and intercept him between Carlisle and Longtown. Lockhart tells the story as follows:

"The ladies of the family and the household occupied four or five carriages all drawn by the Marquis's own horses, while the noble Lord himself brought up the rear, mounted on a small pony, but decorated over his riding dress with the ribbon and Star of the Garter. On meeting the cavalcade, Scott turned with them and he was not a little amused when they reached the village of Longtown, which he had ridden through an hour or two before, with the preparations which he found there made for the dinner of the party. The Marquis's major-domo and cook had arrived there at an early hour in the morning and everything was now arranged for his reception in the paltry little public-house as nearly as possible in the style usual in his own lordly mansions. The ducks and geese which had been dabbling three or four hours ago in the village pond were now ready to make their appearance under numberless disguises as *entrées*. A regular bill-of-fare flanked the Marquis's allotted cover; every huckaback towel in the place had been pressed to do service as a napkin, and, that nothing might be wanting to the mimicry of splendour, the landlady's poor remnant of crockery had been furbished up and mustered in solemn order on a crazy old buffet which was to represent a sideboard worthy of Sardanapalus. I think it worth while to preserve this anecdote, which Scott delighted in telling, as perhaps the best relic of a style of manners now passed away and never likely to be revived among us."

The Old Marquis's death was characteristic of his life. He suffered from an internal complaint under which he wasted away until he was but a shadow of his former self. "How long have I got to live?" he asked his physician peremptorily. "Well, my lord," was the reply, "you might live for several years yet if you would abstain from driving out." The Old Marquis immediately ordered his carriage, drove out as usual, came home and died like a gentleman.

How can we judge such a man? It is almost impossible for us, after a lapse of a hundred and thirty years, to sit in satisfactory judgment on a representative of a by-gone order. According to our ideas the atmosphere which surrounded him was one of unbroken vulgarity; but it was not reckoned as vulgarity in his own day, because vulgarity was universal and the word itself bore a different meaning. "The Duchess of Dorset is by no means what Miss Cope was," Lady Bessborough writes to her nephew after a visit to Knole, "she looks vulgar and bad." Here it is obvious that neither adjective is used in the modern sense. By "vulgar" Lady Bessborough does not seem to have meant "common," for the lady criticised cannot well have looked more common as Duchess of Dorset than she did as Miss Cope; nor, by the use of the word "bad," does she mean to take away the poor lady's character. What she evidently means is that the new Duchess looked out of place in the magnificent surroundings of Knole.

Again, when one of the hundred and twenty who slept under the Priory roof had the misfortune to help himself to salt with the point of his knife, Lady Morgan tells us that he was unanimously voted to be "very vulgar." But it would never have occurred to any of those present to attribute vulgarity to the great man sitting at the head of his table in blue ribbon, Star and Garter. In the language of the day he would probably have been described as having "great pride." In a letter written in 1803, Sir Thomas Lawrence says: "Whatever character of pride the world may have given to Lord Abercorn, he is just as pleasant and kind and gentle with his family and friends as a man may be." Lady Holland, however, who hated my great-grandfather, wrote of him in quite a different strain. "He is always supposed to be a little cracked," she says, "and his pride is beyond belief. His language is so *outré* from the manners of common life that it would appear caricatured even upon the stage."

The fact is that he was, even in his own day, a bit of an anachronism, for the manners and customs of the eighteenth century were looked upon, in the enlightened nineteenth century, with a coldly disapproving eye. The French Revolution had horrified people beyond measure, but it had jerked them to their feet and made them see life with new eyes. Before the French Revolution the parade of gilded magnificence was more or less universal among those who had any gilded magnificence to parade, but afterwards any such display was smiled at as a relic of a by-gone epoch. Customs which had previously seemed quite fitting and proper began to be viewed, even by those who practised them, with a less favourable eye. A more subdued scheme of life became general and was marked by one of the most sudden and radical changes in dress that Society had ever seen. The Georgian ladies of the pre-Revolution period, with their absurd quilted flounces, their ruffles, their lappets and their immense piled-up head-dresses of wool and horse-hair, undesirably inhabited in the majority of cases we are given to understand, but, as a set-off, crowned with feathers, lace and gay ribbons, completely disappeared—swept away by the indefatigable crusade against such absurdities which was led by Charles Fox and Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire. Their successors displayed clean heads and simple draperies of a semi-classical type. The new simplicity of dress was accompanied by a new simplicity of life—as it ever has been and ever must be. Wraxall's comments on the amazing changes in this direction, which took place within a few years, are most illuminating reading.

" I passed the ensuing winter of 1776 in London; a period which is now so distant, and the manners as well as the inhabitants of the metropolis have undergone, since that time, so total a change that they no longer preserve almost any similarity. The sinister events of the American War had already begun to shed a degree of political gloom over the capital and the kingdom; but this cloud, dark though it was, bore no comparison with the terror and alarm that pervaded the firmest minds in 1792 and 1793 after the first explosion of the French Revolution, the deposition of Louis XVI and the commencement of the Continental War in Flanders. In 1777 we in fact only contended for Empire and Dominion. No fear of subversion, extinction or subjugation to foreign violence or to revolutionary arts interrupted the general tranquillity of Society. It was subjected indeed to other fetters from which we have since emancipated ourselves—those of dress, etiquette and form. The lapse of two centuries could scarcely have produced a greater alteration in these particulars than have been made by about forty years. That costume which is now confined to the Levée or the Drawing-room [in the Court sense] was then worn by persons of condition, with few exceptions, everywhere and every day. Mr. Fox and his friends, who might be said to dictate to the town, affecting a style of neglect about their persons and manifesting a contempt for all the usages hitherto established, first threw a sort of discredit on dress. From the House of Commons and the Clubs in St. James's Street, the contagion spread through the private assemblies of London. But, though gradually undermined and insensibly perishing of an atrophy, dress never totally fell till the era of Jacobinism and Equality in 1793 and 1794. It was then that pantaloons, cropped hair and shoe-strings, as well as the total abolition of buckles and ruffles, together with the disuse of hair-powder, characterised the men, while the ladies, having cut off their tresses which had done so much execution, exhibited heads rounded *à la victime et à la guillotine* as if ready for the stroke of the axe. A drapery more suited to the climate of Greece or of Italy than to the temperature of an island in the fifty-first degree of latitude, classic, elegant, luxurious and picturesque but ill-calculated to protect against damp, cold and fogs superseded the ancient female attire of Great Britain, finally levelling and obliterating almost all external distinction between the highest and the lowest of the sex in this country. Perhaps, with all its encumbrances and inconveniences, it will be found necessary, at some not very distant period, to revive in a certain degree, the empire of dress."

The Old Marquis, as may well be supposed, was one of those who did not change with the times and one who would have been guillotined ten times over rather than have conformed to the democratic tendencies of his latter days, and so he continued to go out shooting in his Star and Garter ribbon and was stared at by the lower orders as a curiosity and, by his own classes, was given the derisive title of Don Magnifico; and yet it may well be that he was by no means wholly to be ridiculed or condemned. He had some fine points, mixed up with others. He was as bad a husband, in the ordinary sense, as any long-suffering wife could have wept over, but, on the other hand, he never drank and he never gambled, nor—in an age when drunkenness and gambling were the pet vices of Society—would he allow anything of the kind in his houses. There are other good marks against his name. During the flour-famine in the early nineteenth century, neither he nor his many splendid guests were allowed to eat anything in which flour had a part. He was as magnificent in his charities as he was in his entertainments, and his fees for services rendered were always on a princely scale. He paid Dr. Pemberton £2000 for making the journey to Barons Court in Ulster in order to bleed his eldest son who was dangerously ill.

Of softness in his nature there appears to have been no trace. When his five beautiful children were all swept away one after the other in the first flush of their youth, he allowed no sign of grief to escape him, nor were any of their names ever allowed to be mentioned again in his presence. And yet, that he was not heartless is proved by the long, beautiful and self-condemnatory epitaph which he composed to the memory of his first wife, the lovely and angelic Catherine Copley, which is still to be seen in Stanmore Church.

Again, when his second wife, wearied of his ceaseless infidelities, ran away with Captain Copley, he divorced her, but, at the same time, settled on her £2000 a year for life. In the *Quarterly Review* of 1826 there is an article by Sir Walter Scott in which he pays an evidently genuine tribute to the many good qualities of this singular character, especially in the matter of his munificent charities.

What was he like? Well, as to that one can speak with no uncertain voice, for he was a much-painted man. Reynolds painted him as a boy and Lawrence has left no fewer than five portraits of him. He was a tall, big-framed man with a broad, bony face, clean-shaved except for short black whiskers, an aquiline nose, piercing and slightly prominent eyes under thick, straight, bushy, black eyebrows and a determined mouth with a slightly protruding under-lip—a fine-looking man and fully worthy in appearance of his title of Don Magnifico, but not a man to offend or quarrel with.

Bentley Priory still stands on Stanmore Hill and is a conspicuous object from the L. & N.W. Railway, but it has lost much of its character of a hundred and twenty years ago, for, when Sir John Kelk bought the place from my father, he pulled down an entire wing so as to bring its dimensions within more reasonable bounds and, at the same time, ruined its appearance by adding a very hideous Italian water-tower.

CHAPTER III

“ LAURA, LAURA, FREDERICK’S COME ! ”

WITH the above brief survey of my two estimable great-grandparents, the one abounding in “ pride,” the other with absolutely none, we may leave the picturesque but extremely wicked days of the Regency, and descend to the more virtuous and less vulgar days of trousers, which first began to conceal the structural defects of masculine legs during the reign of George IV. Whether as the result of wearing trousers or from other causes, it is interesting to note that, as the century advanced, that particular quality which we now describe as “ vulgarity,” but which Horace Walpole called “ pride,” became less and less a characteristic of the *beau monde.* Under the reign and before the example of Queen Victoria—herself a lady of the simplest tastes—its decline steadily continued as the century grew, but it is doubtful whether the most enthusiastic champion of Mid-Victorian days can claim that it was, even in those enlightened times, wholly dead. It was, it is true, being rapidly shed, but among the members of that “ old school ” which, in every generation, lags a lap or two behind the hot-footed champions of progress, it can hardly be denied that there were still to be found symptoms of the old leaven. If these dear old things had been accused of “ pride,” they would no doubt have yielded the point without any great debate and without any sense of delinquency, but if for “ pride ” had been substituted the word "vulgarity" there would indeed have been an uplifting of hands and a wail of protest. They vulgar! They, the *crême de la crême* of Mayfair and Belgravia with their four quarterings, their refined French-pointed speech, their restraint in dress and their complete control over their h's! The very idea was unthinkable. Common people, of course, who helped themselves to salt with the points of their knives, were often vulgar—regrettably vulgar—but THEY! Good heavens! What next? And yet, looking back upon them and their ways with the cold glassy eye of detached criticism, it is hardly to be denied that there was, in some of them—not in all by any means, but certainly in some of them—a very traceable streak of a certain quality which, whether we call it "pride" or "vulgarity," is not noticeable in the same class to-day and is not held in high esteem by the same class to-day. It would really seem as though each generation of the *beau monde*—as far back as we can see with any reasonable clearness—sheds a little of the vulgarity of its predecessor, as we recede farther and farther from barbarism. However, let us very properly shun theoretical prosings and come down to a, more or less, cold survey of facts.

One long stride in our hop, skip and jump from the proud, rollicking days of Don Magnifico to this present, neutral-tinted year of grace lands us right in the middle of the strait-laced, high-bonnetted, crinolined, shawled and slightly affected Lauras and Claras of the Mid-Victorian period. Here we can stand at ease, half-way between the third and the fifth George, and cast the eye of reflective appreciation backwards and forwards.

In looking backwards we are more or less at the mercy of painted canvasses and printed records, but, in looking forward, we have to deal with one of the enclosures of life over which we have first skipped and gambolled, then walked in measured dignity, and finally hobbled. However, before doing either the one or the other, let us look around us where we stand, in the middle days of the good Queen. Let us suppose ourselves in London.

Our grimy but rather beloved Metropolis is hardly recognisable as the same town through the crowded streets of which we try to elbow our commercial way to-day. It is just as grimy, perhaps even more so, but in place of the hustling, bustling mobs that to-day jostle one another on the pavements, like a train of ants on the scent of a dead mouse, only an occasional leisurely pedestrian would then meet one's eye, meticulously dressed, if he belonged to the *grand monde*, and studying every pose and gesture, so that it should in no way deviate from the standardised pattern. In the highway, between the pavements, rare tradesmen's carts, hansoms and four-wheelers clattered musically along the macadam and, in the afternoons, one's eye would be gladdened by the sight of proud, fat horses, drawing the Countess's C-spring barouche with prancing, leisurely paces towards the Park. Everyone and everything was leisurely in those good old days, for no one had anything to do and the main object of Society was to kill time rather than to save it.

These proud, prancing, corn-stuffed horses—now, alas! only to be seen effervescing in Schweppe's and Buchanan's vans—as whisky and soda horses should—were a solace and a joy to the eyes and, in spite of their apparent obesity, were capable, when called upon to do so, of prancing to considerable distances. The handsome 16·2 black-brown horses that drew my mother's carriage were often called upon, during the summer months, to take us from Chesterfield House, where we then lived, to Richmond, there to visit either my uncle Lord John Russell (or Earl Russell, as he became later) at Pembroke Lodge, or else the old Duke of Buccleuch (Walter Francis) at his delightful villa on the banks of the river. When Pembroke Lodge was our goal my father did not form one of the party, for he viewed my mother's half-brother with anything but love, more I believe on political than personal grounds; for a Whig was to him not merely as a red rag is to a bull, but rather as a whole bale of Turkey twill, stretched out and flapping in the wind. As far as I was myself concerned, removed as I was in my velveteen-knicker-bockered youth far above the petty acrimonies of party politics, I rather liked my uncle. He was, as I remember him, a small monkeyish man with a pleasant smiling face, an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes suitable to early boyhood and a "way wid him," as the Irish say. His delinquencies as Whig Prime Minister did not trouble me in the smallest degree.

Pleasant, however, as my uncle was in his own person, there was a certain stiffness about Pembroke Lodge which awed us as children; but our other Richmond expeditions to the Duke of Buccleuch's villa down by the river were pure joy from first to last; for not only was there the river running hard by, into which, with luck, we sometimes managed to tumble, but, bordering it, a fine big garden to play games in; and on the other side of the road, approached by a fascinating subterranean tunnel, a large and fruitful kitchen-garden where—while the Ladies Scott were trying, with only partial success, to squeeze their crinolines decorously into the confines of a Thames boat—we younger children would carouse on gooseberries and raspberries to our hearts’ content, and sometimes, alas ! to the subsequent discontent of our stomachs.

Ah ! well, that was all in the very long ago. That villa of many delights was in time sold to Sir T. Whittaker Ellis, and as to who goes through that subterranean tunnel and eats the gooseberries and raspberries now, I neither know nor care. They will never do it with greater appreciation than we did.

It is difficult for a mere short-coated, Homburg-hatted product of the hard-working, hurrying, strenuous, business-like, impecunious twentieth century to form any adequate picture of the peaceful serenity that reigned in the purlieus of Mayfair during the Mid-Victorian period. A stroll on an August Bank holiday down Upper Grosvenor Street and Park Lane might convey some faint idea of the normal conditions that then prevailed on ordinary working-days, but, even so, the noise of motor-cars would spoil the comparison, and moreover the face of the streets has changed almost past recognition. The latter change is wholly to the good. Architecturally the Mid-Victorian houses were very inferior to those that line the streets to-day; but they were made bright with innumerable flower-boxes and, in the afternoons, an additional touch of brightness was lent to the scene by the occasional beautifully-appointed carriages standing motionless opposite open doors, awaiting the dilatory appearance of their respective mistresses. A gaily-plushed Jeames, standing by the door of each carriage, gave an artistic finish to the picture and a glance through the open door of the house would have revealed two or three more of these decorative figures held in reserve by the butler. Instead of the horrible jarring thrum of motor-vans and taxi-cabs that now beats ceaselessly upon our unwilling ears, our nerves were then soothed by the musical champing of the big sleek horses' bits, as they tossed their heads and flecked the pavement with impatient foam.

Let us, by way of experiment, take up a position opposite the door of No. 200 Upper Brook Street and, if we are fortunate, we may presently be rewarded by the sight of the young Countess of Mayfair emerging from her house for her daily afternoon drive in the Park. This is indeed highly probable, for before the door stands her well-known and beautifully appointed carriage. It is a large barouche, slung high on C-springs. The panels, in the centre of which is emblazoned the Mayfair crest, are painted a fine cobalt blue, while the spokes of the wheels are striped in a variety of colours in which blue and yellow predominate. The coachman wears a close-curled white wig, while the haughty Jeames, in order to preserve the harmony of the colour scheme, carries a thick plaster of powder on his own black locks. They are both dressed alike in embroidered yellow cloth coats, with blue facings, blue plush knee-breeches of the same colour as the carriage, and white stockings. They wear on their white heads low-crowned tall hats with cockades, curly brims, and gold-lace decorations. They are both big men with impassive countenances that as yet show little trace of the vast quantities of beer that they manage to consume when off duty.

It is a sad fact that the dear little Countess does not include punctuality among her many domestic virtues; and, while the carriage is waiting its customary half hour, we may as well seize the opportunity so offered to cast a glance back upon her past life which, it is pleasant to reflect, will bear the very closest inspection.

We will start by taking a back-somersault of about six years, which will land us just opposite the handsome Georgian portico of Shrewsbury Park, the seat of the most noble the Marquis of Shropshire. The Lady Laura Salop and her sister Lady Emily, who is two years younger, are just returning from their three-quarters-of-an-hour morning constitutional, which they take at the same hour every day, under the charge of their governess, a prim and highly-credentialled maiden of many winters. It is a beautiful day in April, but they are, none the less, all three walking very prudently in the middle of the fine broad sweeping drive that leads up to the portico, for, as is well known, no Mid-Victorian governess ever allowed her charges to stray off roads or gravel paths on to the perils of damp grass. It was an axiom of the day, with all instructors of youth and equally with those who employed them, that dire disease, in one form or another, inevitably followed on any rash, wild, dare-devil excursion on to the mown grass of the lawn during the Spring, Autumn or Winter months. In Summer, of course, when the sun was well up, the rule was waived, and exciting croquet-matches were even allowed; but not in Spring, Autumn or Winter. No, indeed. So along the middle of the beautifully-rolled and weeded gravel drive walk Laura and Emily and the governess in their half-blown crinolines, flat hats and square-toed, low-heeled boots. Their pace is decorous, for the day is warm and, under their bulging skirts, the two girls wear three petticoats—two linen and one flannel. The governess, who is rather liable to chills and who has poked her nose out after breakfast and assured herself that the wind is from the

East (it being, as a matter of fact, from the North-West) has thought it prudent, in her own case, to add yet another flannel petticoat. Below all these petticoats they wear long linen trousers down to the ankle.

It can readily be understood that, thus encumbered, poor Laura and Emily are far from experiencing that joyous freedom of limb which sends the modern girl of sixteen bounding and leaping over the fields and meadows; nor would any such pagan exercises have been viewed by Lady Shropshire and the governess with anything but strong disfavour. Girls in the 'fifties were never allowed to run or jump or whistle or swim or climb trees—dreadful thought!—or get hot, or do any of the joyous, dishevelling, water-splashing, mud-accumulating, strenuous things that made their young brothers' lives such an endless pleasure. Boys were not marketable products, but girls were, and, as such, had always to be kept nice and cool and neat and unruffled.

So every morning, at one o'clock precisely, Laura and Emily start out for their morning constitutional, returning exactly at a quarter to two, so as to allow full time for the necessary preparation for luncheon. Luncheon is, of course, at two, and, although there is no one present at the meal but Lord and Lady Shropshire and their two pretty but grotesquely-dressed daughters and the governess, the little party is nevertheless waited on by a butler, groom of the chambers, under-butler and two footmen, the last three being powdered and wearing white stockings, dark breeches and coats and striped green and white waistcoats. During luncheon the groom of the chambers is told to order the young ladies' pony-carriage to come round at three.

At three precisely, therefore, our little trio of girls and governess reassemble under the portico and install themselves, not without difficulty, in the basket-work, four-wheeled, very low, boat-like little carriage which there awaits them—so low in fact is it that, amidships, it is little more than a foot from the ground. The little boy-groom, faultlessly dressed in white breeches and top-boots, green brass-buttoned coat, brown leather belt and tall hat, climbs into the little perched-up seat at the back, and off they amble. This daily afternoon drive of theirs is not merely in the interests of pleasure and health; let us not for a moment harbour such a libellous thought; it has also its charitable purpose, for the Ladies Laura and Emily, being very kind-hearted and in this respect taking after their mother, have armed themselves with a great deal of the superfluous food served up at luncheon, which is now tucked tidily away in large glazed-ware jars under the seat of the pony-carriage, and this it is their intention to unload by degrees at sundry cottages of deserving villagers. There is, it must be owned, a certain sameness about the recipients of this bounty, for although the pony between the shafts is staid and respectable to the last degree, and would sooner die than run away or shy or kick or do anything indecorous, he is, on the other hand, a very indifferent annihilator of space.

In due course, having dispensed their charity, and having been profusely blessed in return, they arrive home again in time for tea in the school-room, after which they sit in the drawing-room with Lord and Lady Shropshire, knitting or reading or working kettle-holders till it is time for their father and mother to dress for dinner, when the two girls kiss their parents and go off reluctantly to supper and bed. If, however, it is Saturday night, they are probably allowed to come down to dessert, dressed in nice white muslin frocks, with blue ribbons here and there. After dinner they will play a duet very passably, and Laura will sing " I built a bridge of fancies," or " Maggie's Secret," quite as well as the songs themselves deserve to be sung.

Such, in the good old Mid-Victorian days, was the daily, deadly-dull existence of all the poor Lauras and Emilys and Claras and Lucys and Harriets. They were not allowed to do anything hot or violent because such rough exercises were held to be damaging to the complexion and so to rub a little off their market value. For it is sad to have to admit that the market value of her daughters was considered by dear Lady Shropshire a long way before their present happiness. They were reared like Pekinese pups for the market. In following this system, Lady Shropshire was not only doing what every other Society mother with marriageable daughters did, but she was also doing what she honestly believed was best in the girls' own interests; for it was an established article of faith with her that the whole of dear Laura's future happiness in life depended on her making a " good match," or, in other words, marrying a rich peer; therefore, what mattered a little boredom and dullness during the short term of her " teens "? The practical effect of this market-product-rearing system was that both mother and daughter looked forward to marriage as a kennel-bound spaniel looks forward to a day's shooting. It made, therefore, for very early marriages; for, in the first place, it strongly disposed Lady Laura to accept the first eligible suitor who laid his heart and his coronet at her feet, so as to escape, by the only visibly open door, from the intolerable boredom of her girlhood; and, in the second place, it made Lady Shropshire eagerly anxious to marry off her daughter at the earliest possible moment, so that she herself should be quit of the ceaseless strain of trying to preserve her market-product in an undamaged condition.

As a result of these two influences pulling in the same direction, it was by no means uncommon for girls to be led to the altar straight from the schoolroom. Even if they emerged from the schoolroom before marriage, the system of microscopic supervision still continued after the weeping, hand-waving governess had been driven to the station for the last time, not because the mother was really afraid of catastrophes, but because she was afraid that, if her daughter had freedom of action, and if it was known that she had freedom of action, her market-value would be correspondingly depreciated. The idea was to keep daughters very conspicuously under glass cases as exhibits for eligible young peers, or eldest sons of peers, to examine and approve and select from, in full knowledge that what they selected always had been kept under a glass case. In common justice to the system it must be admitted that the exhibits which it offered for inspection were very nice, clean, fresh, docile exhibits, without a scratch or a chip on them anywhere. It is also not to be denied—even by a retrospection which condemns the system—that it was productive of good matrimonial results, but it achieved these results at a very heavy sacrifice, for it made maiden life cruelly colourless and the maidens themselves cruelly dull. They knew well enough, poor dears, that they were mere exhibits, and the knowledge tended to knock all spontaneity out of them, and also had a tendency to make them artificial and affected and morbidly conscious of sex. How could it be otherwise when they knew that they were mere baits to catch a gudgeon?

However, let us leave generalities and come back to our particular little Laura, growing up nicely and decorously at Shrewsbury Park and sometimes at 50, Great Stanhope Street; for it need scarcely be said that Lord and Lady Shropshire went up to London every year for the Season, taking with them, of course, their two daughters and the governess. However, as Laura, the elder of the two daughters, was only sixteen and not yet "out," she got, of course, no balls or operas or even plays, for the latter were very often not quite consistent with the glass-case system of culture and therefore to be avoided. Still she went to the Zoo and to an occasional circus or magic-lantern-slide lecture, which was better than Shrewsbury Park. And so was the morning walk in Hyde Park better than the morning walk at home, and the afternoon drive in the "Sociable" with her mother *much* better than the perambulatory tour in the basket-work pony-carriage for which it was the substitute. So, all things considered, Laura and her sister looked forward with feverish excitement to their three months every summer in London.

We may, however, skip the particular London Season during which Laura celebrated her seventeenth birthday, and we may skip the two months at Eastbourne which succeeded, and hurry on to the eventful shooting-party at Shrewsbury Park in the November following. Among the guests on this occasion was to be observed young Frederick Audley, fifth Earl of Mayfair, and—though it is of course not for a moment to be supposed that he had been asked because of his eligibility—yet it is a noticeable fact that, during his visit, dear Laura, quite contrary to ordinary rule, is allowed to "sit up " for dinner every night, although it must be owned that she retired to her dimity-curtained bedroom immediately after dinner. It also generally happens that, even if Lord Mayfair does not take Lady Laura in to dinner, he finds her sitting on the other side of him. Before he has been two days in the house, he knows perfectly well that the eldest daughter of the house is being ceaselessly dangled as a bait before his coroneted young head; but he also knows that the bait which is being so dangled is a very sweet and charming bait, even if a little insipid, and so he accepts the situation resignedly. Laura, for her part, is fully alive to the fact that an Earl is an Earl, as also that this particular one stands rather high in the list. She also knows perfectly well that she will get well rapped over the knuckles with the school-room ruler if she allows him to leave, at the end of his visit, without his having first plumped down on his knees to her on the hearthrug in the library.

> " Laura, Laura, Frederick's come !
>   Put on your bonnet, he's here.
> Never look obstinate, sulky or glum,
>   Wait till you're married, my dear."

So, although she is not in the least in love with her Frederick, she thinks that it would be rather fun to have a house of her own and, above all, to get away from Fraulein Gungel and the dreadful daily walks round by the weir-bridge and the home-farm and back by the dairy; and so—although she doesn't put her bonnet on—she none the less smiles her sweetest at Frederick and, on the last day of his visit, asks him if he would like to come to the library and look through a stereoscope at coloured views of London, " *so* pretty," with all the windows of the houses lighted up and pin-pricks representing the distant lights along the river. Of course Frederick would like to; there is nothing, in fact, that he would like better.

So they sit side by side on the sofa, holding up the binoculars towards the colza-oil lamp on the round table with its plush cover fringed with little dangling balls of wool and, although the colza-oil lamp—like all its kind—gives forth a most subdued radiance, it is still sufficient to make all the windows in the views appear to be brilliantly lighted up.

They use the binoculars in turn, but at last an argument arises as to the identity of a particular building in one of the views, and as neither can make the other quite understand which building they are talking about, it becomes necessary in the end for both of them to look through at the same time, he looking with his right eye through the left-hand lens, and she looking with her left eye through the right-hand lens. That of course does it, and before Laura has even time to cry " Oh ! " she finds herself firmly held in Lord Mayfair's strong right arm and kissed again and again, while the stereoscope rolls uncared for and forgotten on the thick Wilton-pile carpet.

Well, of course, with Lady Shropshire sitting in the next room and only one door to the room, there is nothing for it but for the two criminals to emerge hand in hand—or, at any rate, morally hand in hand—and make a full confession. Lady Shropshire of course was *never* so surprised in her life, but *so* pleased, etc., etc.

" So these are wed, and merrily ring the bells,", and Lady Shropshire and the Dowager Countess kiss one another lovingly in the vestry and all the daughter-encumbered mothers in London envy Lady Shropshire's luck in getting her daughter off at the age of seventeen on to a belted Earl with many acres; although the actual wording of the congratulations which pour in is, you may be sure, couched in more tactful language.

That marriages so arranged—for to all intents and purposes such marriages were arranged—should, in the majority of cases, have turned out well—as they unquestionably did—may at first sight seem strange, in view of the fact that Lord Mayfair was practically the first eligible young man that Laura had ever spoken more than ten consecutive words to, and that he had proposed, so to speak, at the point of his mother-in-law's truculent chin; but the truth is that they had very little chance of turning out otherwise, owing to the intermittent retirement to which the young Countess was condemned for the first twenty years of her married life. If her pre-nuptial days had been dull, her post-nuptial days, poor dear, were even worse. She became a mere child-bearing machine without refuge or remedy. From the day of her marriage till she reached the repose of middle-age, poor Lady Mayfair but rarely stepped forth from the shadow of the domestic retirement to which the custom of the day condemned her—a passive sacrifice on the altar of perpetual fecundity.

By such drastic methods the Divorce Courts were of course cheated of their prey. With a few lurid exceptions, the Mid-Victorian aristocracy of Great Britain stood out as bright and sunny examples of connubial constancy; and few were found uncharitable enough to suggest that the constancy of the Countess, at any rate, was a matter of necessity. It was pleasanter to assume that, even had her family been on the niggardly lines of the twentieth century, she would still have shunned the eye of the bold, bad baronet and have gone down to posterity as a shining example of all the virtues.

Of the practical side of life poor young Lady Mayfair knew absolutely nothing at all. Of the price of bread and butter; of the jumble of virtues and villainies that go to make up life; of the sad chicaneries of those who go down to the basement in low-heeled shoes, she knew no more than did the lop-eared rabbit which she fed with lettuces on Sunday afternoons. She had not been taught these things because it was hoped that, after marriage, she would be too deeply engaged in imitating the lop-eared rabbit to have any need of such Bayswater and Bloomsbury knowledge. All that her expensive governesses had taught her had been to make crude water-colour drawings, to play selections from Hervé and Offenbach with only occasional false notes, and to interlard her conversation with stray scraps of French. The first two accomplishments she threw behind her for ever on the day of her marriage; they were really only useful as lures for young men who enjoyed turning over music or carrying camp-stools. But the third accomplishment she retained till her dying day.

However, enough of little Lady Mayfair's past life, for, while we have been burrowing and prying into her old schoolroom days at Shrewsbury Park, she has at last managed to get her bonnet to sit on the top of her ringlets to her satisfaction, and here she now comes tripping down the steps and looking extremely pretty and nice. It is, by the way, a matter for congratulation that we have taken up our position opposite her door at this particular period of her career, for it is but very rarely that she is in a condition to appear in public. However, now that we have got the chance, let us make the most of it and watch her closely. With an air of as much dignity as her limited number of inches enable her to muster, she passes through the little group of Jameses assembled in the hall, and climbs up into her splendid carriage, which tilts over to an angle of 30 degrees as she puts her weight upon the step, revealing, as she does so, about two feet of the long, white, down-to-the-ankle linen trousers which the modesty of the day demands should be worn beneath her crinoline. Over the swelling expanse of her hoop she wears a dress of pale pink silk; her shoulders are gracefully draped in a red Indian shawl of the Paisley type, and on her shapely head she carries a black bonnet lined with white which rises to a high pointed peak some eight inches above her forehead, giving her, in full face, the appearance of one of Frederick the Great’s Imperial Guard. Her equipment is completed by a very small pink parasol poised on the end of a very long handle. As soon as she has pressed and coaxed and squeezed her crinoline into decorous billows, Jeames climbs upon the box, folds his arms magnificently and there sits in Sphinx-like stolidity until the return home.

The Countess makes the usual round of the Serpentine, beginning with the Ladies’ Drive and finishing at Hyde Park Corner, after which, if the afternoon be fine, she repeats the tour. She smiles, nods and bows ceaselessly to passing acquaintances, for the Park is by now full of handsome carriages and all the occupants know one another, sometimes intimately and sometimes only rather distantly, but, in either case, everybody knows who everybody else is, for only those of exalted position would have had the temerity, in those select days, to drive the round of the Serpentine between three and five in the afternoon. Should others have so ventured, they would have received the very coldest of stares.

Occasionally in the course of her tour her little ladyship will call to the coachman to draw up by the side of the road, if she happens to see some male acquaintance taking his afternoon airing on the footway. Then will the talk be all of the recent doings in the fashionable world—the engagement of Lady Victoria, the recent marriage of Lady Georgiana or the dreadful attack of gout that has seized poor dear Lord Adolphus by the big toe. As they thus exchange ideas, Lord St. James leans lightly with one hand on the carriage door while, with the other, he gently caresses one of his long, weeping, macassar-oiled whiskers. He is faultlessly dressed in the loose shapeless clothes which are the fashion of the day. His utterance is slow and drawling and his remarks are not such as to call loudly for perpetuation. Lady Mayfair, in fact, does most of the talking, as a spirited lady should. She asks her companion if he has read Lord John Russell's last speech, but, on his replying that he never reads the speeches of "confounded Whigs," she abandons the field of politics and they return to their contemplation of Society's births, deaths and marriages. Had he heard that Lady Alderney had just had her fourteenth? They were all *so* pleased about it, as that just made the number of boys and girls equal.

However, I think we may now leave our two friends talking by the side of the massive-posted, thick-barred railings which guard Hyde Park pedestrians from chariot-charges, and cast a glance round at the streets and parks which then environed them; and we cannot well do better than by beginning with Lady Mayfair's own dingy-fronted brown brick house in Upper Brook Street, the funereal aspect of which is cleverly disguised behind a bright array of green and white flower-boxes, filled with pink geraniums and white marguerites. Having cast one quick, admiring glance upon these it would perhaps be well, for purposes of wider inspection, to start a new chapter.

CHAPTER IV

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF YE ENGLISH

In the days when I first caracolled joyously down Great Stanhope Street with the hop-and-go-one action peculiar to early childhood, I took, as may be supposed, but a passing interest in the science of horticulture. But none the less my eyes were greatly cheered and, to a certain extent, fascinated by the brilliancy of the flower-boxes that turned their glazed-tiled façades to the thoroughfare down which I pranced on my way to the Park. According to my recollection, flower-boxes were in far more universal use in London in those days than they are now. It may well be that those glad spots of brightness on the brown-brick or stuccoed surface of Mid-Victorian houses were almost a necessary relief from the universal gloom which would otherwise have prevailed. For, in those good old days beyond recall, all London houses were either brown brick or stuccoed. Red brick residential houses were not started in London till the 'seventies, and then only on the Westminster estate. Stone-faced residential houses belong to a later date still. Some of the detached, palatial abodes of the illustrious were built of stone in Mid-Victorian days, but all the street-row houses and houses in squares were either brown brick or stucco, and presented, to the wayfarer, façades of a uniformly depressing gloom. To try to brighten these grimy and grim-looking houses in some way was almost a matter of necessity, and the obvious—and in fact the only—way in which the householder could achieve this worthy end was by means of flower-boxes. Apart, however, from this one praiseworthy effort in the matter of their window-boxes, it cannot with truth be claimed that the Mid-Victorians numbered horticultural enterprise among their shining virtues and accomplishments. They were, in fact, to tell the sad, sad truth, sublimely ignorant of the subject, as indeed they were of all practical subjects. The joyous amateur gardener, who to-day finds such unfailing solace for the falling off of his dividends and the burden of Income Tax in the slaughter of slugs and wireworms and in the encouragement and coaxing, both offensive and defensive, of his Clarkias and Godetias, had not as yet seen the light of this world. Illustrated florists' catalogues, which are either the cause or the effect of the amateur gardener, and which—in either case—are certainly his unfailing friend and comforter, had not yet been born; and very few of the flowers and shrubs, the description of which causes the mouth of the modern amateur to water with happy expectation, were then even known by name to the gardening world. Ignorance on the subject was, in fact, profound and unashamed, and it is very greatly to be doubted whether the professional gardeners knew much more on the subject than those who employed them. Fruit and vegetable culture they well understood, but in unmarketable flowers they took but the very shallowest interest. In this respect it must be owned that they differed very little from modern gardeners, who, in the sad experience of most of us, take no real interest in anything which is not marketable in the nearest town. The æsthetic side of gardening, therefore, must always be in the hands of someone who has a soul above the sale value of plums, cabbages or carnations—in other words, of an amateur. In Mid-Victorian days there were no amateurs and the lords and ladies of the period would as soon have thought of criticising the Pentateuch as of offering a suggestion or giving an order to their gardeners.

With such a lack of knowledge and interest in high circles it is not surprising that the Victorian period saw little progress in the art of growing flowers. The gap indeed between gardens of the present day, laid out under the intelligent direction of the owner, and those of fifty years ago is immeasurable. There was not even a striving after variety or originality. Every bedded-out garden looked exactly like its neighbour. There was, I remember, a regulation border without which no self-respecting garden was held to be complete—a border with coleus at the back, then scarlet geraniums, then calceolarias and blue lobelias in front. This slightly gaudy but typically Victorian combination, now no more to be seen, then met the eye in every private garden and every public park, in town or country. It represented the *ne plus ultra* of gardening imagination. Hyde Park in the 'sixties was very nearly as bare of flowers as the sands of Dee. No rhododendrons or azaleas then soothed the eye of Lady Laura or Lord Augustus as, with their fat groom plodding along breathlessly behind them, they tittupped decorously down Rotten Row, she in her neat-fitting habit and tall hat and he in his tight blue overalls with their broad band of braid down the seam and their straps under his box-spurred Wellington boots. There were no signs then of the present beautiful flower-display, which so gladdens our eyes every summer, between Rotten

Row and the Ladies' Drive; and the beds between Stanhope Gate and the Marble Arch—since conceived, born and dead—had not then been so much as thought of. Hyde Park's main horticultural exhibits were elm-trees, laurels and hollies, the uniform blackness of which was relieved here and there by a straggling border of disconsolate-looking, long-stemmed, magenta-flowered annuals, the name of which I was never able to learn. It is sincerely to be hoped that they are an extinct species; but in those days they figured conspicuously in every London flower-bed which was not occupied by the brown, scarlet, yellow and blue border already described.

Our own enormous garden at Chesterfield House, which by the application of present-day knowledge might have been made a dream of floral beauty, could boast nothing more soothing to the eye or nose than those dreadful scraggy magenta annuals, with, of course, the everlasting coleus, geranium, calceolaria and lobelia border close to the house. At the foot and at the head of the stone steps leading from the house to the garden stood large hydrangea plants in wooden tubs.

As to trees, elms, as I say, were the only ones to meet the eye. The piebald-stemmed plane trees, the vivid green foliage of which now does so much to relieve the gloom of London and to brighten our squares and parks, were then only in their infancy and formed no appreciable feature in the landscape. The great majority of them had not yet been planted. The boulevard trees—if one may so call them—that now sprout so gaily from the pavements of Piccadilly, Northumberland Avenue, Charing Cross Road and other Metropolitan thoroughfares, had not even been thought of in those days.

The Green Park, which now lives up to its name by furnishing Piccadilly and its offshoots with fresh-tinted verdure throughout the summer months, was then a bare field filled with black sheep. The willow trees, which Harriette Wilson, in her scurrilous and, I am sure, most mendacious Memoirs, assures us flourished there in the merry days of the Regency, must long since have succumbed to the ever-increasing smoke; and the plane trees were not! In Hyde Park there were no plane trees, no birches and no berberries. All these are products of a later period.

Inside the brown-brick and stucco houses there was no sign of the gloom which was so grimly stamped upon their exteriors. On the contrary, after the tall-hatted and frock-coated visitor had passed the barrier of the front door and had mounted to the drawing-room—still carrying his hat, stick and gloves, according to the foolish but cast-iron rule of the day—his eye would light pleasantly on bright, shiny chintz chair-covers, bright, shiny chintz curtains, many flowers blooming in pots, the plebeian terra-cotta sides of which were partially hidden from view by open trellis-work screens of blue or green painted wood, made so as to expand or contract to fit the dimensions of any pot. If the visitor arrived at tea-time, gaily caparisoned footmen would move radiantly but noiselessly about the room in the performance of their menial but, generally, welcome offices. If, however, it so happened that the afternoon caller was of the old school, he would resolutely but politely decline tea on the grounds that it would "spoil his dinner." This meant, in plain language, that he was afraid that, if he indulged in tea, he would deprive himself of a still greater pleasure later on, when he hoped and indeed intended, D.V., to eat straight through the long succession of rich and succulent dishes which Mrs. Schulentahl's three-hundred-guinea cook would set before him that night. His refusal of tea, however, would have been just as stern and uncompromising even if he had been dining with a Duke or a Bishop, for, although the quality of the dishes proffered by the last two might have been slightly less luscious than those in which Mrs. Schulentahl's soul delighted, there would have been no diminution in the quantity. For let it not be forgotten that the number of dishes which it was obligatory on the host to have handed to his goggle-eyed guest was laid down by statute. From this rule there must be no parsimonious departure. Even to an ordinary small family party the dinner served consisted of soup, fish, two entrées (one after the other), joint, game, sweet and savoury, followed by an elaborate course of cheese, toast, butter, radishes, celery, and mustard and cress, the special function of which was supposed to be to clear the palate for the good wines to come. This last course was, to a great extent, a legacy from former days, when the real cheery dog was usually carried to bed by two of the gaily-caparisoned staff. In Mid-Victorian days drunkenness, as a fashionable pastime, was all but dead: but, even then, it was the invariable and much-to-be-condemned custom of the host to reverse the Scriptural rule and give his guests inferior wine during dinner and reserve the real gems of the cellar till after the dessert had been handed round.

Absurdly over-loaded as these dinner-programmes were, it was by no means unusual for those who sat round the board to eat straight through them from end to end—a feat which sometimes called for special preparations of one kind or another during the day. As they ate, the older men would pour forth loud tributes of appreciation over this dish or that, as they smacked their lips between the courses and eagerly scanned the menu to refresh their memories as to what was coming, for no man could carry it all in his head. People were unashamedly greedy in those days. They talked incessantly of their food. It was the fashion. The host and hostess were not ashamed to take open note of what their near neighbours at the table ate and, if anyone passed a dish untasted, they would earnestly press him or her to think better of it. Often the appeal was not in vain. It was considered little short of an insult to your host's cook—and vicariously to you—not to eat straight through the menu from end to end.

The general sobriety of the Mid-Victorians, in the matter of alcoholic beverages, was really remarkable in view of the fact that very few of their fathers had ever been able to walk to bed. The six-bottle men and even the—formerly despised—two-bottle man had entirely vanished from Society's horizon within the short space of one generation, and, by the time that Queen Victoria had been twenty years on the throne, half-bottle men were the common product of the day and eating had wholly superseded drinking as the pet vice of Society. In spite of the diminished repugnance with which people had begun to look upon their breakfasts, hours, both in London and in the country, still remained very late. In the country, after the ladies had gone to bed, there was a compulsory parade in the smoking-room of all the male members of the party, who, after an allowed interval of ten minutes or so during which they changed their clothes, reassembled in the secluded den appointed for the purpose, in all the glory of silk smoking-suits of every conceivable colour and design. Almost as much importance was attached to this ritual as to the great ceremony of dinner. Absentees were not infrequently "drawn," as it was considered to be both eccentric and rude to the host for any man—no matter how tired he might be—to seek his bed before his fellows.

In the smoking-room there was probably more drinking—by comparison with modern habits—than in the dining-room. Men who were forced to sit up, whether they wanted to or not, had practically no option but to enliven their enforced vigil by continued potations, whether they wanted them or not. The beverages in fashion were brandy and soda and, for more mildly-inclined revellers, sherry and seltzer. Whisky was a spirit unknown to private houses in the haughty Mid-Victorian days. It was looked upon as a cheap and vulgar intoxicant mainly in favour with hairy-legged, red-bearded savages in kilts.

The late sittings in the smoking-room were not so destructive of sleep as such wearisome vigils would be to-day, for breakfast in houses of high repute was not till ten. In the country the meal was, in many houses, preceded by family prayers at 9.30, but in London, for reasons probably not unconnected with balls and opera, the poor servants had to embark upon their daily duties without the advantage of this stimulus. Luncheon, in sympathy with the late breakfast, was at two. Five o'clock tea, as a focus-point for feminine gossip, was even then in strong favour, but the male person who attended this unmanly rite was looked upon with secret contempt. He descended at once to the level of a "tame cat."

Dinner was invariably at eight. The quarter-past-eight habit had not yet been introduced and, indeed, would have been almost unworkable in view of the drawn-out length of the Aldermanic feasts which were then considered necessary to the sustenance of life. Besides, the tea-scorner and dinner-gloater could hardly have curbed his impatience till 8.15.

It is fairly obvious that ten o'clock breakfast and two o'clock luncheon could not go hand-in-hand with anything in the nature of work, but, as no one in Society ever did any work, this really was not a consideration worth bothering about. The only professions open to the sons of fashion were the Army, the Navy, the Bar, and the Church, and of these the last gradually dropped into disfavour as the rich livings in the gift of landowners dwindled in value. The other three professions were looked upon as gentlemanly recreations, but as nothing more. Efficiency in any of them was not aimed at and it may even be said that it was not desired, for efficiency seemed to carry with it the insupportable suggestion that the efficient one was in some measure dependent on his profession for his livelihood, otherwise why should he take the trouble to become efficient? So efficiency in any profession was not reckoned "quite the thing." It was hardly gentlemanly, just as, at the same period, it was hardly considered quite ladylike for any fair member of the fashionable world to confess to robust health.

The science of inefficiency among the leisured classes was not confined to the mere mercenary professions. It intruded upon every detail of ordinary domestic life. No one had even the most shadowy knowledge of anything practical. No one indeed would have confessed to any such knowledge without a certain sense of delinquency. Practical knowledge was held to be for house-keepers, gardeners, keepers, grooms, and such-like, and even perhaps for the next stratum above of professional men, but certainly not for flounce-skirted ladies and long-whiskered gentlemen. Estate owners, happy in the possession of highly-rented farms for which they could pick and choose such tenants as they would, nevertheless, or perhaps, rather, because of that, had the very vaguest idea as to the details of their incomes. All such sordid matters were left in the hands of estate-agents and family lawyers, an arrangement which, of course, suited the estate agents and family lawyers very well indeed. Money questions, whether in relation to rents or dividends, were never so much as touched upon in polite Society. A guest introducing the subject of income tax or the rise in the bank rate would have been stared at coldly and would not have been given a second opportunity of launching out on such sordid topics.

Members of the *beau monde* had, of course, to pay very dearly for the ignorance and inefficiency in which they took such pride. Those who served them in various capacities and who smirked and bowed before them in such unctuous servility, took every advantage behind their backs of a situation which seemed specially designed by Providence for the improvement of their own bank balances, and which they themselves, of course, lost no opportunity of encouraging. Even in the matter of sport, amusement or daily routine, the fine ladies and gentlemen could do nothing for themselves. Servitors took their railway-tickets for them, laced their boots, paid their cab-fares, affixed their salmon flies—did everything for them, in fact, except blow their noses. Can it be wondered at that, under such conditions, the belief gradually took root that disaster would at once follow if anyone but a servitor put his hand to the simplest practical operation? It was an article of common belief, in my primrose days, that a house would at once blow up if anyone but the footman lighted the gas.

On one occasion Lord Carlisle, when Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, ventured, in the temporary absence of the A.D.C.-in-waiting, to take his own ticket from Westland Row Station to Kingstown. He asked for a ticket to Kingstown and was, of course, given a third, armed with which he took his seat in the train. Presently the ticket-inspector came along and was shown the Lord Lieutenant's purchase.

"Come out of that now," he said roughly.

"What do you mean?" said the indignant Viceroy. "I am the Lord Lieutenant."

"Lord Lieutenant or no Lord Lieutenant, out you come," said the adamant official. "I'm tired of the likes of you riding saft with no more than a bit of pink cardboard on ye. Come out, I say."

Luckily the A.D.C.-in-waiting, who had been dispatched to a distant part of the station to send off a telegram, arrived on the scene at this moment and the situation was satisfactorily explained.

An exaggerated, and quite unreasonable, fear of infection was another of the peculiar features of the times, and one which may in a sense be reckoned as a by-product of the state of circumscribed helplessness in which Society lived. Sufferers from any malady which was supposed to be in any degree catching were isolated in a remote part of the house, which was fenced off with vinegar-soaked sheets. Beyond these sheets no one ever penetrated except doctors, nurses and housemaids. I always used to wonder, even in my very youthful days, why it was that doctors, nurses and housemaids never caught things which were supposed to be fatal to the high-born. I could never extract an answer to this conundrum from anyone to whom I put it. The fact was, of course, as one sees clearly enough now with the discerning eye of experience, that family doctors deliberately encouraged the fear of infection so as to increase the power of their hold over the establishment, and the Mid-Victorians were too simple and too credulous to see through the device. They were just children in their supreme ignorance of the world—happy, unsophisticated, spoon-fed children, innocent of all guile.

Nowadays, of course, we are very grown up and can do all sorts of things for ourselves. We are no longer drones but honey-bees, buzzing busily along in search of suitable blossoms from which to extract nourishment and having quite a nice discrimination in choosing those on which to settle. We are no longer happily unpractical. The day for this is past. We know quite a number of things of which our grandparents were blissfully ignorant. In cases where we are landlords we have mastered the rudiments of agriculture. When broad acres are not ours, we grin like dogs and run about the City. We storm the strongholds of lawyers and wrestle falls with them—sometimes, even, with success. We know all about rents and dividends, stocks and debentures and a great deal too much about income tax. We invade the sick-rooms of people covered with spots and come out as immune as did the doctors and nurses and housemaids of old; and—best of all, perhaps, in our list of assets—we view the great world of men and women from within instead of from the aloofness of a superior pinnacle.

And yet, after all, if we weigh the merits of this generation against those of the last generation, or, rather, of the generation before that again, we shall probably find that, as regards progress or decadence, there is not much in it. What we have gained on the swings, we have lost on the roundabouts. In our capacity as private individuals we have probably gained in sincerity and in broadmindedness, but we have lost in manners and we have lost in dignity. In our public life there is nothing but loss to be registered. We have descended to depths at the very contemplation of which the Ministers of Queen Victoria would have shuddered in their broad-toed, serviceable boots. But with the degradation of public life we are not, at the moment, concerned, nor is it at any time so interesting a study as private life. Public life is confined to the few, but private life is everyone's concern, and in private life we are probably neither better nor worse than those who were before us. We are just different. There is a change in values. We assess reality higher than we did, and sham lower. And so we are much nearer to calling a spade a spade, not because we are brutal or callous, but because we are sufficiently enlightened to know that no good purpose is to be served by calling it a George II silver spoon, as Laura, Lady Mayfair, was brought up to do, and as she would still do because she was so brought up. She is one of those who cannot attune her mind to the changed values. With her the unaccustomed is the wrong simply because it is the unaccustomed, quite apart from its intrinsic morality or the reverse. So it must always have been, and so it always will be, the rising generation thinking the last generation slow and the last generation thinking (and calling) the rising generation fast. And both are wrong. There is only a change in values, and a change in the guise in which certain eternal problems present themselves. Sometimes these problems present themselves frankly, without pretending that they are other than they are; at other times they come masked and cloaked, and slinking along in the shadows of the byways. From the mere moralist's point of view there is not much to choose between the two methods of approach. They both lead to the same side-door. But from the point of view of the cynical observer from the first floor window, honest badness does seem somehow to be less repulsive than badness which poses as goodness. In the middle days of the last century, and for some time after, it is not to be denied that there was, in all ranks of Society, a good deal of the latter. Lady Mayfair would in all probability deny this charge hotly and in perfect good faith, because, of course, she and all the other dear Lauras and Claras and Emilys were themselves as fresh and guileless as a Lincolnshire narcissus and knew nothing of all these things; but, none the less, it is the sad truth that running through Mid-Victorian Society, with all its charm and with all its many undoubted virtues, was a strong vein of Pharisaical humbug. People pretended to be good, but they were not so good as they pretended to be and everybody knew that they were not so good as they pretended to be, and still pretended that they did not know. There was, in fact, a universal tendency to simulate a disbelief in the existence of those common-to-all-time delinquencies which the latter Georgian bucks had so shamelessly flaunted in the patched and powdered faces of their dames. But it was all a sham and a pretence. Under the regulation veneer of prudery which the social attitude of the day considered becoming, any number of most undesirable institutions flourished like so many young palm trees. It was inevitable. A puritanical surface, especially when enforced by Royal decree, inevitably makes for a vicious underworld, which dies of inanition, or, at any rate, nearly dies as soon as honesty takes the place of sham. The scandal of the Victorian streets; the scandal of the red blinds, where are they now? Gone, wiped clean off the dirty pavements. They are now no more than ugly memories; but in the straight-laced days of the good Queen they flourished most bravely and disreputably. Pardie! they did. To-day, *Dieu soit bénit*, the white-tied diner-out, pursuing his homeward and, at times, slightly unsteady course, can thread the straits of Piccadilly in peace and safety, which he certainly could not do in Victorian days. Other lights are now shining in dark places. We can look back upon the drunkenness of the Georgian days with the contemptuous disdain of the pint-of-claret drinker; and, as we satisfy our inner cravings with the modern modest dinner, we can extend the same contemptuous disdain—in a more diluted form perhaps—to the gluttony of the Victorian era. We have certainly, in these respects, climbed a rung or two up the ladder of civilisation. The modern subaltern drinks barley-water with a cheerful countenance and the Duke satisfies his thoroughly contented guests with four courses. For all these Edwardian and Neo-Georgian blessings we raise the glad song.

It is to be feared that, if the still bright and charming eye of Lady Mayfair falls upon these few lines, she will come as near to sniffing as anyone so beautifully brought up can when attempting the operation in a ripe old age; for, to her, all that happened in the golden days of the 'fifties and the 'sixties seems beyond reproach, whereas everything which happens now—in the Society world, that is to say—is vulgar, decadent and generally *dreadful.* This applies comprehensively and indiscriminately to all the manners and customs of the third decade of the twentieth century, but, noticeably dreadful above all else, is, of course, the appearance, dress, language and general deportment of the girls—those dreadful Daphnes and Irises. What she thinks of them is not said in so many words, for dear Lady Mayfair's refined vocabulary does not boast any adequately expressive terms, but it is conveyed to Lady Albert Memorial in a series of head-wagging, eyebrow-lifting, shoulder-shrugging gestures, which are not so libellous perhaps as spoken words, but which are far more damaging, because there is no limit to the interpretation which may be put upon them. One cannot therefore help feeling that it would come as a severe shock to Lady Mayfair were she to learn that exactly the same things as she thinks of Daphne and Iris were not only thought, but said, of her and all her fellow-Lauras and Charlottes and Emilys when they were girls sixty years ago. Yet so it was. This sad truth is not paraded in any desire to throw mud upon the completely unmuddied record of either Lady Mayfair or that monument of rectitude, Lady Albert Memorial, whose maiden name—as everyone knows—was the Honourable Clara Primprude, but simply in illustration of the unchallengeable dogma that every generation of girls is called nasty names by the generation which preceded them and that therefore the nasty names go for nothing. How long ago is it since Cicero held up his hands and sighed "*O tempora, O mores!*"? Well, certainly two thousand and probably more. I forget his exact date. And we may be quite sure that what he was groaning over on that occasion had nothing on earth to do with Catiline, but was simply a complaint over the fact that the Misses Octavia and Lucretia Cicero wore their togas at a different angle from that affected by Mrs. Cicero and, probably, in still greater contrast to the way in which it was worn by the Dowager Mrs. Cicero. For so it ever has been and ever will be. We see those whose hey-day was in Mid-Victorian times shaking their heads over the Neo-Georgian girls. Let us hear the voice of one whose own sun was setting in those gilded Mid-Victorian days, and who shook his head over the dear Lauras and Emilys just as they now shake their heads over the Daphnes and Irises.

Captain Rees Howell Gronow was a gentleman of an ancient Welsh stock who obtained a commission in the Grenadier Guards at the early age of sixteen, served through most of the Peninsular War, and thereafter spent his life alternately soldiering and playing the gay dog in the fashionable worlds of London and Paris. He wrote Memoirs all through his life, and his last and most comprehensible volume of reminiscences was written in those idealistic Mid-Victorian days from which we are led to believe that we have now so sadly fallen away. Let us lend our astonished ears to his summing up of the situation.

" Perhaps it is," he says, " because I am growing old and women have less power to charm than heretofore, but, whatever may be the reason, I cannot help thinking that, when George III was King, the women of England were more beautiful, better bred and more distinguished in appearance and, above all, in manners, than they are nowadays. How grand they used to look with their tall, stately forms, small thoroughbred heads and long flowing ringlets, dreamlike fair and queenly as Ossian's fabled daughters!

"I do not mean that there are not now, as there always have been in every state of Society, beautiful and amiable women combining good sense and high principles; but there are too many who walk out with their petticoats girt up to their knees, who address men as Jack, Tom and Harry and discuss the last story fabricated in the bay-window at White's, the faintest allusion to which would have made their mothers' hair stand on end with dismay and horror.

"The girl of 1862 who is not fast is generally dull and *blasée*, pleased with nothing and possessing neither the wisdom of age nor the *naïveté* of youth."

Can we really believe that it is about Lady Mayfair and her contemporaries that Captain Gronow is saying these nasty things? It seems almost incredible, for these are just the sort of things which they themselves are always saying about the Neo-Georgian girls. Were they, then, in truth open to these grim reproaches? or was it only that the Indian-curry-inflamed eye of the retired Army Captain so saw them? I think the latter. The ladies of sixty years ago, says Lord Albert Memorial, were more beautiful, more amiable and more decorous than those of to-day. The ladies of a hundred and twenty years ago, says Captain Gronow, were more beautiful, more amiable and more decorous than those of sixty years ago. Horace Walpole, no doubt, would have made a very similar comparison between the *fin de siècle* ladies of the eighteenth century and those of George II's reign, entirely in favour of the latter; and with all these prejudiced comparisons we sympathise because they merely register the natural regret of the grey-headed for vanished smiles of sacred memory. It would be waste of good time and quite unprofitable to argue with a Mid-Victorian that his or her view is warped and crabbed, and from any such forlorn-hope undertaking, Good Lord deliver us! But when we find Captain Gronow drawing unfavourable comparisons between the starched, exemplary, heavily-chaperoned, twice-to-church-on-Sunday Mid-Victorian girls and the coarse-tongued polyandrous beauties of the Georgian era—well, really that is going a little too far. For let us not, in our capacity as arbitrators, lose sight for one minute of the fact that there has probably never been a more ill-conducted, disreputable Society in London than that to which Captain Gronow looks back with such admiring affection. In excuse for the ladies of that date it must be owned that the men were unqualified beasts. Their entire nights were spent in drinking and gambling at Brooke's, White's or Crockford's to the utmost limits of human capacity. Crockford himself is supposed to have won a million and a half from the bucks and dandies of his day. What chance had the poor ladies with husbands who were never sober and who were not ashamed to use their wives as subjects for ribald jokes and disgusting wagers? It was a bad age, in spite of the exemplary conduct of the King himself; while the Mid-Victorian age, as everyone knows, was respectable even to the verge of prudery; and yet, this doddering old Georgian captain actually has the audacity to accuse the bread-and-butter misses of 1862 of saying and doing things at the very thought of which their wicked old grandmothers would have blushed! For of course it was their grandmothers that he meant and not their mothers. No girl of 1862 could have had an eighteenth-century mother.

Captain Gronow's plaint is, of course, too extravagantly absurd, but it just shows with what a jaundiced, bilious, bloodshot, prejudiced eye old age can scan the youthful fair ones by whom it is surrounded when once the golden bowl is broken and the grasshopper has become a burden.

> " For loving looks grow hard and cold,
> Fair heads are turned away
> When the fruit has been gathered, the tale been told
> And the dog has had its day."

And the dog, of course, resents all this and says unkind things of the fair heads which turn away, and compares them unfavourably—as does Captain Gronow—with the heads which used not to turn away in the days

> " When all the world was young, dear,
> And all the trees were green,
> And every goose a swan, dear,
> And every lass a Queen."

But, although one sympathises with the eternal regrets which agitated poor Gronow's soul, it is impossible to pass over in silence his aspersions on the dear, sweet, fresh, simpering, silly Lauras and Emilys of the later 'fifties. They could blush very prettily themselves, but they never, never made anyone else blush, and as to their hardened old grandmothers—ah, well ! let us leave them in peace and pass on.

CHAPTER V

NOW AND THEN

From the guileless, careless, credulous, unsophisticated days of crinolines and Paisley shawls, let us once more leap the cruel intervening years and, as we alight in the middle of these hurrying scurrying days, let us once more bring our enquiring eye to bear on our old friend Laura, Countess of Mayfair, whom we first saw blushingly playing cat's-cradle with the enamoured young Earl in her schoolroom days at Shrewsbury Park.

She still has her old house in Upper Brook Street, where she entertains, in a quiet, subdued fashion, such of her old contemporary friends as still survive. She is a very handsome old lady with snow-white hair and a skin which is still wonderfully pink and white for all her eighty years. Her intelligence is keen and alert and she has a certain shrewd knowledge of the world which she herself would be loth to admit had been acquired within the last twenty years of her life, but, none the less, that is the cold, indisputable fact. No longer does she live in a happy, unenquiring fool's paradise, smilingly unconscious of the bare-faced peculations of her obsequious household. No longer do her tradesmen's regrettable errors in addition pass unnoticed. Gradually, with labour and perseverance, her children and grandchildren have opened her eyes to the sad chicaneries of those who have served her so long and so unfaithfully.

Her general outlook on life, however, and her appraisement of what is fitting or the reverse is unalterably cast in the Mid-Victorian mould, the shape of which her youngest and favourite granddaughter, Sybil, cannot succeed in altering by the breadth of a single hair. It is pleasant to see how absolutely devoted to one another these two, grandmother and granddaughter, are, but they nevertheless spar ceaselessly, in a good-natured, amiable kind of way, over the respective merits of Mid-Victorian institutions and present-day institutions. Neither ever succeeds in convincing the other and neither has the slightest hope of ever convincing the other, but none the less they keep it up eternally. In this never-ending duel it must be owned that the aggressor is always the Dowager, who refuses to admit propriety in anything which was not the custom when she was a girl and who, consequently, views her granddaughter's anti-Victorian antics with wondering apprehension, as indeed she does the whole structure of modern life. She absolutely refuses to move with the times and honestly believes that the whole world is mad, as no doubt Mrs. Noah did when she held up her hands and shook her head over the goings-on of Miss Shem and Miss Japhet.

One of the Dowager's greatest friends, as we have already seen, is old Lady Albert Memorial, and these two have many a crack and many a croak together. They see absolutely eye to eye with regard to the madness of the present-day world and as to "the dreadful times in which we are living, my dear." "No modesty, no restraint," says Lady Albert in her deep bass voice; "why, I actually heard the other day that Iris Topgear," etc., etc. "Well, I am not in the least surprised," is Lady Mayfair's comment. "Can we wonder at anything with people going on the way they do?

They tell me that there is a perpetual *queue* a mile long outside the Divorce Court and that poor Mr. Justice Horridge can hardly find time to have his luncheon; and then those dreadful girls flicking their nasty cigarette-ashes all over my Persian carpet, and my own dear little Sybil dancing seventeen consecutive fox-trots with a man she never saw before, and the whole lot of them driving about all night in taxis with strange men! I think it's all too dreadful!" Lady Albert cordially agrees, as she always does, but what she and Lady Mayfair think so dreadful is not what actually happens, but what they, in their upbringing, were always taught to believe would happen if the heavy chaperonage of the day was, for one moment, relaxed. What actually does happen when dear little Sybil drives home with Reggie Youngnut about four in the morning to the shelter and grandmotherly protection of the house in Brook Street is this or something very like this:

Reggie. "How about golf to-morrow?"

Sybil. "Not for me, thank you. Bed for me till luncheon time."

Reggie. "Well, how about Saturday?"

Sybil. "Yes, Saturday would do all right. Wait a bit though. How about Lady Podgyback's dance on Friday night? Ain't you going?"

Reggie. "No; haven't been asked."

Sybil. "Well, I could have taken you, only I'm going with Percy Poorman. H'm; that's rather a nuisance. Never mind; I'll chuck it early and then I shall be able to get up next morning. Where shall we play? Sunningdale?"

Reggie. "Yes; all right. I'll call for you about 10.30."

Sybil. "Good. Well, thanks awfully for bringing me home. Good-night, old thing."

Reggie. "Good-night, Sybil."

It may of course be that there are occasions, during the coming and going of the twelve moons that go to make up the year, when the conversation in the home-bound taxi does not follow the exact lines indicated above; but it may safely be said that such occasions are the exception and not the rule. Both maids and men have ceased to be the opportunists that they were when opportunity came but once in a blue moon. Familiarity breeds contempt, or, as the Latin sage puts it conversely but even more effectively, *omne ignotum pro magnifico.* Had Lady Mayfair, in her own calf-days, (oh! wild and impossible thought!) taken part in a similar small-hours-of-the-morning drive, and had Lord Adolphus taken his leave of her in the off-hand and unemotional fashion in which Reggie Youngnut made his adieus to Sybil, the pained and disappointed maiden would at once have knocked ten points off her former estimate of her own attractive value. Not that the Lauras and Claras were in any way other than they should have been. Any such suggestion would be grossly calumnious; but that their mothers lived in perpetual fear for them is made tolerably clear by the ceaseless chaperonage with which they were guarded; and the Dowager Countess's feelings when she first discovered that Sybil ridiculed the idea that any such chaperonage was necessary are hardly to be described. For the first month or so her frame of mind was that of a cooped hen watching her chick coquetting outside with a pack of stoats, but later on, when, to her amazement, she found Sybil emerging smiling and unscathed from all the stoat-infested cul-de-sacs into which she had two-stepped so light-heartedly, her fears gradually became swallowed up in a kind of numb, dull astonishment.

Nothing could ever persuade her that the new ideas were not all wrong, but gradually she found herself forced, much against her will, to the conclusion that the results were not as disastrous as —according to all Victorian rules—they ought to have been.

There are other aspects of modern life which are not only a puzzle but a perpetual pain to poor Lady Mayfair, as, for instance, the commercial moods and the commercial conversation of young Dukes and Duchesses. In her own young days, when income tax was scarcely more than a name and when death duties and super-tax had not yet been born, the subject of money was never so much as touched upon in the conversational ventures of the great. For two proud noblemen to have discussed their incomes or the last dividend paid on their ordinary shares over their '64 Leoville would have caused the eyebrows of pained astonishment to rise all round the dinner table. Let the middle-classes batten on such sordid topics, if they would; but among the ranks of the *élite*—well, it simply was not done. And yet, as Lady Mayfair well knew, the up-to-date peers thought nothing of doing things of that sort. Why, even her own nephew, the present Lord Shropshire, was chairman of a railway and, when in certain company, would break out into an extraordinary jargon in which there cropped up all sorts of dreadful words such as "rolling-stock" and "flanges" and "laminated springs," which she was quite sure her poor dear father would have been ashamed to use. However, as all the world was mad, it was hardly to be wondered at that even her poor nephew had gone a little bit crazy with the rest.

She herself makes no attempt to understand the modern point of view. As far as is possible she adheres strictly to the old routine to which she has always been accustomed. Every day, during the summer months, when weather permits, she drives in the Park but in only a shadow of her former glory. Her footman is now no more than five foot three in his boots and her coachman is a wizened little old man with a red nose. They wear sombre liveries and they both cut but sorry figures by comparison with the radiant objects that performed similar offices for her in the hey-day of her youth and glory. Her unpretentious landau is drawn by two melancholy and unenthusiastic horses.

Sybil, out of good nature, generally accompanies her grandmother on these drives, although, to tell the honest truth, they bore her very grievously indeed. She is a pretty, bright, attractive girl, absurdly lissom and flexible in appearance compared to what her grandmother had been in her youth, and without nearly so faultless a complexion, for she plays lawn-tennis in blazing sunshine, golf in all weathers, and swims a good deal in the sea during the summer months, all of which exercises tend of course to wipe a little of the first downy bloom off maiden cheeks. She never uses a parasol, though her grandmother, from force of habit, puts one up at the faintest suggestion of sun. She also does nothing to improve her complexion and her general attractiveness by systematically stewing herself in hot baths, which was, of course, an unheard-of thing in the middle days of the good Queen. When the Dowager Countess was a girl, there were no such things as hot baths in the modern sense. Every big country house, it is true, boasted one or more large iron tanks encased in mahogany, evidently designed to do duty as baths and—judging from their size—designed to accommodate several people at once. At one end of these tanks was a brass dial on which were inscribed the words "hot," "cold" and "waste," and a revolving handle manœuvred an indicator into position opposite such of these inscriptions as a prospective bather might be attracted to. When the indicator pointed to "cold," there was a free response in the shape of a flow of clear, clean water, which made its appearance through a small circle of perforated holes in the bottom of the bath. A call on the hot water supply, however, did not meet with an effusive or even a warm response. A succession of sepulchral rumblings was succeeded by the appearance of a small geyser of rust-coloured water, heavily charged with dead earwigs and bluebottles. This continued for a couple of minutes or so and then entirely ceased. The only perceptible difference between the hot water and the cold lay in its colour and in the cargo of defunct life which the former bore on its bosom. Both were stone cold.

In the face of such uninviting conditions, it can readily be understood that these huge enamelled iron tanks were not popular as instruments of cleanliness. In fact, although Eastwell and Barons Court, two big country houses in which much of my early youth was passed, each boasted two of such baths, I have never heard of any of the four being used for the purposes for which they were no doubt originally designed. As boys, my brother and I found the lower bath at Eastwell admirably suited to the trial trips of our toy boats; and at Barons Court, where we had no toy boats, it was our practice to use the ground floor bath as an occasional aquarium. A few small rocks from the neighbouring burns and some rhododendron branches artistically arranged against the iron-work lent a natural appearance to our aquarium and afforded pleasant lurking-places for its scaly inhabitants. It is sad to have to place on record the distressing fact that these efforts of ours in the interests of natural history did not always arouse equal enthusiasm among the other members of the household.

In the absence, then, of the modern stew-bath, the Ladies Laura, Victoria and Georgiana were driven to perform their periodical ablutions in their bedrooms with the aid of a hip-bath, by the side of which were placed a can containing hot water, and a can containing cold water, side by side with a complete equipment of sponges, soap and flannel. The actual operation of washing, I was always given to understand, was not unduly protracted, for, as everyone knows who has made the experiment, three parts of the anatomy of anyone using a hip-bath are out in the cold, cold blast and any attempt to raise the water-level to more enveloping heights results in the flooding of the room upon the slightest movement of the body.

It is hardly necessary to say that the Dowager Countess—even in her enlightened old age—will have nothing to say to the modern, long, narrow bath, which she condemns as the father and mother of appendicitis, pneumonia, pasty complexions and flabby figures; and who knows but that she is right? Dear Sybil, however, laughs all these croakings to scorn and stews herself every day in two feet of water as hot as she can bear it without being skinned. Either as a direct consequence of this or, perhaps, merely from a wish to look smart, she finds it necessary to carry on her nose about half an ounce of powder which she applies shamelessly in full sight of all the world, and by the aid of which she imagines—quite wrongly—that she improves her appearance. For the rest, she smokes six cigarettes a day and—no matter how great the provocation—she neither swoons, simpers, bridles nor blushes. She is very self-reliant, as honest as the day and as unaffected as the new moon. When she marries, which she has no intention of doing in a hurry—for she thoroughly enjoys her girlhood—she will make just as good a wife and a much better housekeeper than her grandmother did when she married. She will not be quite so good a mother in the way of devotion, but a better one in the matter of common sense, for she will not be a mere cypher in the hands of her hoary-headed brandy-loving old nurse, as the Countess was when she paid her timid and apologetic visits to the dimity-curtained nursery in the opening years of her married life.

While reflecting on the various influences which have gradually weaned us from our former starched superiority to the soft-collared independence in which we now revel so unashamedly, there is a certain interest in tracing the gradual absorption by the upper classes of ideas which have surged up in their midst from the despised depths. In every case, such ideas—on their first intrusion upon the sacred preserves of the elect—have been lashed with the tongue of bitterest contempt, yea, even of horror. Following this—as these detested sights become more and more familiar—they are merely greeted with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders and a sigh for the passing of hallowed observances. In the end, however, in every case, these plebeian ideas, so bitterly derided at first, have been ecstatically hugged to the bosom of Society.

> (Plebeian)
> "Vice is a monster(s) of so frightful mien,
> As, to be hated, need(s) but to be seen;
> (their)
> Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."
> Pope (*adapted*).

NOW AND THEN

Few people are old enough to remember the first invasion of electric light from the base purlieus of the middle-classes into the marble halls of the illustrious; the horrified protests of ballroom dames and damsels when first the old flickering, guttering, spermaceti candles were replaced by the searching glare of bulbs; the wild complaints that no one who was not made up as for the stage could possibly show herself in the glare of such a cruel searchlight without alienating the affections of every man who loved her; the obstinate refusal of many of London's great ones to so much as recognise the existence of electric light, which they condemned as a vulgar, low, blatant, commercial form of illumination and one which nothing would ever induce them to allow in *their* houses. For them the good old candles and the dear old colza-oil lamps with their round globes and their little clinging, coloured-lace shades which—even if they didn't give much light—at least gave a cheerful gurgle when you (I beg pardon, when Thomas, the footman) encouraged them to greater efforts by turning the oil-tap.

Then, a few years after the electric-light innovation, came the invasion of the low-wheeled, multiplying-gear bicycles. The improvement on the old high-wheeled machine was so remarkable that the whole world of busy men was at once attracted by the obvious usefulness of the new invention. The roads became crowded with enthusiastic cyclists hurrying to and from their work and pursued by bitter execrations from those whose scandalised horses shied at them. "Cads on castors" was one of the least offensive of the terms of reproach which whistled about their unrepentant ears. They were a danger to the country. They ought to be prosecuted as a public nuisance. They ought to be taxed out of existence. They ought to be plastered with mud by foot-passengers, etc., etc.

And then a few ticks of the big clock; a few revolutions of the hands, and lo and behold! what do we see? Why, the whole of London's proud nobility transformed into "cads on castors" and, with set, rigid faces, pursuing their wobbly career through the avenues of Battersea Park!

About the same period a certain number of persons of the baser sort grieved the eyes of all self-respecting people by appearing at dinner and in theatres in short black coats which they styled "dinner jackets." These low people or, at any rate, their sisters and their cousins—not content with offending the eye by their uncanonical appearance—passed on to even graver offences. In subscription-ballrooms and such-like places, they and their female associates trod strange, slow, syncopated measures, at which the *trois temps* experts looked with undisguised repugnance. Opprobrious names were fashioned to fit these dances and the commercial centres from which they sprang, or were supposed to have sprung. They were described as Liverpool Lurches, Sheffield Shuffles and Huddersfield Hugs and we all laughed derisively when we so described them. This was all no more than forty years ago, and yet to-day, in this present year of enlightenment, the noblest in the land parade their proud forms in dinner-jackets and their haughty sons and daughters dance nothing but Liverpool Lurches, Sheffield Shuffles and Huddersfield Hugs. The dances bear other names now and they are danced to other tunes with a slightly different metre, but the governing principle is the same and the general effect to the eye is the same.

Finally, and in much more modern times, came the "road-hogs," buzzing about our highways in malodorous, mechanically propelled cars and pursued with high-bred execrations by those to whom the only proper means of locomotion was a carriage and pair. Well, there are a good many "road-hogs" now.

The fact of the matter seems to be that, among the champions of *temporis acti*, every departure from the accustomed is at first assailed with abuse as a matter of principle and quite irrespective of any sterling virtues which may lurk hidden behind its York or Lancastrian origin. But there are very clear limits to the powers of obstinacy of such as lay themselves out—as a mere matter of principle—to oppose that which is in itself good and useful and, at the same time, attractive. After a time our proud noses reluctantly drop a point or two; the stern, straight line of our mouth is forced, even against its will, into a glad, crescent smile; we cease to thank God that we are not as other men are and we slip into our dinner-jackets and are happy.

It would seem as though the two extreme ends of Society must always combine in condemning anything to which they are unaccustomed. "What was good enough for my father is good enough for me," is equally the slogan of both, although in the case of the top stratum of Society it is perhaps more poetically expressed. If this is true, we seem driven to the conclusion that, if it were not for the middle-classes, we should eternally stand still.

CHAPTER VI

FROM JOSHUA TO JOHN

THE fifty years that lie between the birth and the meridian of the nineteenth century are in one respect the most remarkable fifty years in the history of England; for, within their short compass, we can trace a headlong fall from the highest spring-tide level of artistic merit ever reached in this country to the lowest depths ever laid bare by a September neap-tide. The fall was, in fact, even more precipitous than the allowance of a full fifty years would imply, for there was really no perceptible fall for the first thirty years of the century. Then, from 1830 to 1860, the gradient was very steep. Mathematically speaking the Mid-Victorian period proper may be said to have ranged from 1860 to 1870, but the neap-tide low level of art was certainly maintained for another ten years; and, if one were seeking to write academically on the subject, the ebb-tide half-century would probably range from 1820 to 1870. However, it will be quite sufficient for the purposes of a cursory and irresponsible audit if we take the first half of the nineteenth century as representing the period of decline, for certainly there was sufficient decline registered during those fifty years for any purposes of illustration required.

Having arrived at the bare, bald fact of decline, which is beyond dispute, the question naturally arises as to the "why?" Why did this most amazing fall take place? Why, within fifty years of the highest artistic level ever reached in English history, did we descend with a flop to the very lowest? It is not as if the Mid-Victorians had cultivated a proud disregard for externals. On the contrary they were, as we know, tremendous sticklers for outward observances. Any self-respecting member of Society would gladly have been boiled in oil sooner than have been seen carrying a parcel in the streets or availing himself of the services of the General Omnibus Company, or of whatever corresponded to that worthy institution in the 'sixties and 'seventies. And yet this strict and almost servile regard for appearances was the accompaniment of an age which will always stand out as the father and mother of everything which is hideous in the history of British dress, art, music, painting, architecture, plate, furniture and decoration. The common apology offered to foreigners to-day for any unsightly object which grieves the eye is that it is Mid-Victorian. The explanation is always accepted as sufficient. If the date had been Early-Victorian the explanation would not have been taken as quite sufficient, for the Early-Victorians had not yet entirely shaken themselves clear of the Georgian picturesqueness. But the Mid-Victorians! Well, their legacies are still with us.

In the field of painting alone it is thought almost beyond the reach of our reeling brains that no more than fifty years of civilised life separate Millais from the matchless galaxy of great painters who immortalized the features of our great-grandparents; or, perhaps we may stretch our pedigrees even a little farther and say the features of our grandmamma's grandmamma, during the reigns of the third and fourth Georges. Within twelve years of the close of the last century a patron of art might have organized a party during which he would have enjoyed the society of Reynolds, Gainsborough, Hoppner, Romney, Raeburn, Opie, Morland, Turner, Constable and Lawrence. All of these immortal artists might have sat round the same dinner-table and quaffed the same red wine in 1788. At a neighbouring table might have been seated at the same time Angelica Kauffman, Westall, Loutherbourg, Faringdon, Fuseli and Copley Fielding. However, let us confine our attention to the first table, for seldom has such a congregation of great painters met together to pass disparaging comments on each other's work. Nor was it fated that this particular gathering should ever again enjoy the opportunity of sitting round the same board for, a year later, Gainsborough would be missing from the circle, and four years after that Reynolds, too, would have gone; but all the rest would be gathered together undivided for another ten years, before Romney followed in the steps of Gainsborough and Reynolds. Then Morland dropped out—dying long before his time, poor fellow, in a sponging house—and six years later Hoppner followed. And so they passed away one by one till the year 1831, when Constable died, one year after Lawrence. Turner was now the only survivor of the great brotherhood of painters, and he outlived the last of them by twenty years and died at the age of seventy-six a very rich man, and was laid to rest in St. Paul's Cathedral by the side of Reynolds, Opie and Lawrence.

Turner was originally discovered, patronised, and generally helped up the ladder of fame by Lord Egremont, an old aristocrat built much on the same lines as my "Don Magnifico" ancestor and one who at that time shed his glory around him at "Princely Petworth," as the palatial residence which the Duke of Somerset had built below the Sussex Downs was called in the last days of the eighteenth century.

In and about this palatial residence Turner spent a great portion of his early life. He was given a private studio of his own in the house, into which even Lord Egremont himself, with all the "prodigious pride" with which Horace Walpole credits him, and with his blue garter-ribbon stretched across his proud breast, did not dare to intrude without first knocking. As a result of the opportunities thus given to the young artist, Petworth to-day can boast the finest collection of Turners in the world, and, as the majority of these are views in Petworth Park itself, their interest and value is by so much the more increased.

Lord Egremont, who was a man of immense wealth, was one of the greatest and most generous patrons of art in the kingdom at that time and must also have been gifted with a very rare discernment, for he practically discovered Hoppner as well as Turner and was one of the first to appreciate at their true value the works of Romney, some of whose most beautiful portraits smile down upon us from the walls of Petworth House to-day, including the famous picture—painted at Petworth—of Lady Egremont and her children as "Titania with the Fairies." At the sale of Sir Joshua's pictures, after his death, Lord Egremont was a large purchaser, and a very discerning purchaser too, for the Petworth Reynolds are among the best there are and, it must be confessed, throw the Romneys and Opies slightly into the shade.

It is interesting, in casting a backward glance at those great bygone days in the world of art, to note that Reynolds was accepted by all the later

Georgian artists—whose works now in many cases realise prices equal to his—as being their undisputed superior. Gainsborough, who was born within three years and died within four years of Reynolds, was the only one of the great Georgian group who, in any way, disputed supremacy with him. They were not friends, being too nearly of a trade, but Reynolds, who was a kindly natured man, allowed himself the luxury of going into raptures over Gainsborough's landscapes, which were not, of course, in direct competition with himself. During the delivery of one of his Royal Academy lectures, Reynolds went so far as to say in the presence of R. Wilson (which was not tactful) that he considered Gainsborough to be the finest landscape painter in Europe. "Yes," said Wilson, interrupting venomously, "and the best portrait painter too." Reynolds did not applaud the remark but he passed it by in silence.

Romney was never an Academician, but none the less he had his school of admirers and—like all the others—his aristocratic patrons, of whom the first and most influential was the Duke of Richmond. For a time he held successful rivalry as a portrait painter with Reynolds, whose principal patron at the same period was the young Duke of Rutland, who bought over twenty of his pictures; but those who did not feel themselves to be under the necessity of championing Romney never placed him on the same level as his older rival.

Hoppner's most illustrious patrons were George III and the Prince of Wales, whose half-brother Hoppner was commonly reputed to be, and, indeed, considered himself to be. Whether the rumour as to his royal parentage was correct or the reverse, he was, in either case, a pure-bred German, for his mother, who was a lady of the Court of George II, was certainly a German, as also was Hoppner senior. At one period of his career Hoppner was a great deal down at Petworth, but he and Lord Egremont unfortunately quarrelled over the matter of a family portrait which remained unfinished in consequence, and the alliance was broken off.

Hoppner's most formidable rival, during the height of his popularity, was Lawrence, the special *protégé* of my great-grandfather, Don Magnifico. Just as Reynolds had been in bitter rivalry first with Gainsborough and then with Romney, so was Hoppner for many years in bitter rivalry with Lawrence. The latter, however, outlived his rival by twenty years. Opie, who was their contemporary, had never any very serious claims to rivalry with the other two, for, although he was generally recognised as a genius quite equal in art to either of them, his rough, uncouth manners and address were very inacceptable to the smart ladies and gentlemen of the day, who greatly preferred Hoppner and Lawrence, both of whom were remarkably fine-looking, handsome men with distinguished manners. The Cornish boor, however, although overshadowed by the polished, semi-Royal painter in life, was his conqueror in death, for he was buried in St. Paul's with great pomp, while Hoppner, who died three years later, had to be content with a humble funeral of a private order. All these painters of the Georgian period were giants in their profession, and will always stand out as giants even when Sir Joshua's masterpieces may have faded past recognition. The mention of any of their names to-day carries the mind back with a jerk to the days which were full to overflowing with the limners of graceful and wonderful women and equally rich in the kindred art of engraving, for never has this art been at a higher level than at the close of the eighteenth century. Architecture, too, in the hands of the Adam brothers, and internal decoration in the same matchless hands were both at their best. To these few crowded years we can trace back almost all that is beautiful in our homes and almost all that is admirable in our public buildings. The greatest treasures of our National and Provincial galleries belong to this period, as do also almost all the masterpieces on the walls of our great country houses before which the visitor stands and gapes in open-mouthed wonder and admiration. And then, in fifty short years, we come tumbling down from these transcendent heights to Millais, Frith and Whistler! For purposes of comparison, however, it is not necessary to go beyond the first-named, for Millais will always stand out as the typically representative artist of the Mid-Victorian period, and as the one whose works most faithfully reflect its peculiar atmosphere. Leslie and Landseer were, of course, Early rather than Mid-Victorians and their works are interesting as registering the half-way mark in the precipitous decline.

If the decadence in painting was so great and so rapid as almost to pass belief, the corresponding decadence in architecture strikes one as being even more staggering. It is almost unbelievable that a gap of less than fifty years lies between the death of Robert Adam and the erection of King's Cross Station and of the gloomy phalanxes of square, stuccoed, Italian-turreted villas that stand sentry along our suburban roads and throw their ill-proportioned shadows across our paths. Why were these abominations perpetrated? Why, with the example of the Adam brothers shining before them, and so very close before them, did the worthy

Victorians conceive and build these eternal monuments of monstrosity? It is not as though Robert Adam was not appreciated by his own generation and that the lapse of a hundred and thirty years was necessary before his genius was recognised. On the contrary, we know that this was far from being the case. We know that he was recognised during his lifetime as being not only the greatest of the four brothers, but even as being one of the greatest artists in his own particular line that Great Britain has produced. So high was the esteem in which he was held that, on his death, he was awarded a funeral in Westminster Abbey with many illustrious pall-bearers to do him honour, among whom were the Duke of Buccleuch, the Earl of Coventry, the Earl of Lauderdale, Viscount Stormont, Lord Frederick Campbell and Mr. Pulteney. And yet, within fifty years of his death, we came down to King's Cross Station! Why was it?

The magnificence of Adam's funeral was, however, nothing by the side of the tremendous ceremony with which Sir Joshua Reynolds had been laid to rest—just one week before—at St. Paul's Cathedral. On this famous occasion the pall-bearers were the Duke of Dorset, the Duke of Leeds, the Duke of Portland, the Marquis of Abercorn ("Don Magnifico"), the Marquis Townshend, the Earl of Carlisle, the Earl of Ossory, the Earl of Inchiquin, and Lord Palmerston. Why Reynolds's particular patron and admirer, the Duke of Rutland, was not among the number remains unexplained.

To revert to the question of the amazing decadence in art during the reign of Queen Victoria, it is difficult to suggest any reasonable explanation. It may possibly be that the young Queen, in very proper horror at the general depravity of the period which had produced these great artists and their immortal works, scented a certain base association between art and vice and, on these grounds, thought it right to condemn, as dangerous to morality, everything which was not severely hideous. To such a lead she would get a strong and immediate following, for it was characteristic of the Victorian aristocracy to model their tastes and habits, their attitude towards religion, and even the size of their families on those of the reigning sovereign. It is quite certain, in any case, that from a variety of causes, which it is impossible, after a lapse of nearly a century, to focus accurately, the sense of beauty in art was entirely lost during the Victorian era. Sir Joshua Reynolds's works were still admired and admitted as great and—in a minor degree—Gainsborough's and Sir Thomas Lawrence's, the latter being chiefly valued on account of their perfect drawing; but Romney's, Opie's, Hoppner's and Raeburn's pictures were practically valueless during the first half of the nineteenth century; and, by the time the Mid-Victorian period was reached, pictures which have since realised five figures had been pushed away out of sight into lumber-rooms and other untenanted recesses of country houses, where they fraternised unseen for the better part of half a century with Chippendale tables, Sheraton cabinets and Hepplewhite chairs, which had also been condemned as indecorous and banished out of sight. In case one might be led to the charitable belief that the ostracism of all these beautiful things was accidental and not premeditated, it is well to remember the amazing doctrine laid down by Thackeray in his "Four Georges," written in the 'fifties, that "painting and drawing were woefully unsound at the close of the last century."

Thackeray may be taken as faithfully voicing the belief prevalent in the Society of that day; for we know that, great and many as their virtues were, the Victorians were not discerning. What one person thought everybody thought.

However, it is always pleasant to reflect that what the Victorians lost in art they gained in decorum and propriety of conduct and, probably, in essential morality. In all these solid qualities they register an immense advance from the disgraceful *fin de siècle* days of the eighteenth century; and for these happy results there can be no doubt that the firm views and fine example of the Queen were largely responsible.

To what painful conclusion, then, does this lead us? Is decency of conduct the hopeless foe of artistic merit? Is it impossible for a woman to have an Aubusson carpet or a Louis XVI writing-table and yet be good? Are flower-painted purdoniums and walnut-wood Davenports a necessary accompaniment of virtue? There is tragedy in the very suggestion, and it is in some trepidation that one's mind ranges inquiringly over the upholstering surroundings of one's friends and relations.

CHAPTER VII

STRANGE PHANTOM SHAPES OF YORE

The decadence in art during the first half of the nineteenth century is so remarkable and so outstanding that, although no one can readily find an explanation of the cause, no one can possibly challenge the fact itself. The moment, however, that we intrude upon the field of dress—and especially of female dress—we find ourselves on ground every yard of which will be disputed and hotly disputed by advocates of this period or that period or the other period. There would be little profit in agitating ourselves over the various changes which took place during the first half of the nineteenth century. They are too far away to have more than a passing interest for us. But when we come to the changes which have been registered during the latter half of the last century or, rather, from the middle of that century to the present day, we are on more familiar ground and we can reflect, with a certain sense of first-hand knowledge, on the strange changes which have taken place during that period in the contours of the female form divine. I am not sure that the word " contours " is, strictly speaking, applicable to the shape of the Mid-Victorian ladies in any of its phases. The word seems to suggest smooth and gradual undulations and there was nothing gradual about them. They suddenly bulged in the most unexpected parts, without rhyme or reason and certainly without any effect of grace. It is difficult indeed to believe that grace was the first aim or, for the matter of that, the second or third aim of those in whose brains the fœtus of Mid-Victorian dress went through its several embryonic stages. It would rather seem as though the first consideration in their minds was that of puzzling mankind as to the shape in which women had been fashioned by Nature. There is no escape from this conclusion, if we lay ourselves out to analyse in detail the motives which prompted the succession of monstrous disguises which the ladies of fifty or sixty years ago thought it necessary to assume before showing themselves to the world.

First came a revival of crinolines on an exaggerated scale, and, when this disguise was penetrated and man had made the discovery that the fair sex were not shaped like hand-bells, another brave attempt at deception was made by means of appliances known as "bustles." A more extraordinary distortion of the human form than that produced by the latter is not easy to conceive. As though in protest against Nature's niggardly dole, large wicker panniers were pinned on where, to the ordinary eye, any such addition would seem to have been least called for. The effect in profile was, of course, very striking, and was, at times, responsible for ribald comments on the part of street urchins; but apologists of the custom contended, I believe, that the addition of the pannier was really in the interest of modesty, as it suggested to wondering man that the entire protuberance was artificial. It was, in fact, according to these apologists, an heroic disfigurement in the interests of the exaggerated modesty which the Victorian mood considered becoming. In the craze for obscuring the lines of Nature, even the shape of the head was tampered with, first by means of sleek chignons pinned on behind, and then by means of fuzzy fringes pinned on, like birds' nests, in front. Shoulders were bunched up till they nearly met the ears, and waists were pinched in almost to breaking point. If we study the vicissitudes of feminine dress from the days of Clytemnestra to the days of George V, we can find nothing, at any period of history, to approach these Mid-Victorian fashions in combined ugliness and absurdity. Ugly dresses may be found at one period and absurd dresses at another, but for the combination of the two in its most aggravated form we have to turn to the middle of the nineteenth century. For it cannot even be claimed that usefulness was aimed at by the Mid-Victorians at the expense of beauty. The dresses of the period were as unpractical as they were ugly. The only thing apparently aimed at was the distortion of the natural shape.

A weak protest against the hideousness and, above all, against the absurdity of Victorian dress was raised in the 'eighties by a band of ill-favoured devotees who named themselves and were named by others "the Æsthetes," but their protest missed its mark very badly. In the first place its apostles were inconsistent in their methods, for, while they professedly aimed at following natural and classical lines in dress, they violated their own principles by pinning on their foreheads an even larger edition of the birds'-nest fringe than did those whom they aimed at reforming. In the second place it must be confessed that the exponents of the cult were not the pick of our island maidens. They were too often dirty and untidy and, in other ways, unsightly. They were, in fact, in the majority of cases, the very worst possible advertisements of the reforms which they advocated and, after having been plastered with ridicule by Press and Stage for some years, they gradually faded away into ignominious oblivion. The most permanent caricature of these abortive reformers which survives is "Patience," but W. S. Gilbert's handling of the Æsthetes in that operetta was gentle and kindly by comparison with that of other contemporary plays, skits and poems which have not come down to modern times.

So the cult died amidst shouts of derisive laughter, but to the modern eye, trained as it is to natural lines and confronted, as it too often is, with daguerreotypes of bygone maiden aunts reposing on chimney-pieces or other suitable pedestals, the dress affected by the Æsthetes of the 'eighties appears both more graceful and more sensible than the rigid hour-glass encasements which confined the anatomies of those who mocked them to scorn. Moreover, a riper and more deliberate survey of that all-but-forgotten sparring-match between the Æsthetes and the orthodox gives rise to certain ungallant suspicions that the feminine outcry raised against the suggested innovations was not entirely dictated by a sense of decorum or even by a sense of fitness. It is a sad truth, but one to which the candid critic cannot with honesty pretend to be blind, that the majority of the fair sex are not faithful reproductions of the Venus de Milo, and the main objection which those who are found wanting in the first essentials of statuary ever will and ever must raise against skimpy or classical draperies is that their successful effect depends almost entirely on the contours of the occupant. To be classically clad is—as most of the dear ladies know only too well—to be found out. Conversely, from the feminine point of view, the great advantage of the standardised Mid-Victorian dress was that it gave nothing away. No matter how glaring might be Nature's defects, a woman could always bring herself up to the standard pattern with the aid of flounces, whalebone and stay-laces. The main thing aimed at was pectoral protuberance, and anyone so endowed was considered to have " a good figure," quite irrespective of any shortcomings in other directions, but these last were indeed so effectually screened from observation by the dress of the period that they were not in the competition. Nowadays anything in the shape of pectoral protuberance is abhorrent to the feminine mind and various devices are adopted to suggest its entire absence, just as, in Mid-Victorian days, various devices were adopted to accentuate it. But the Mid-Victorian " fake " was by far the more pronounced of the two and the more reprehensible. Why so deceive poor man? Why so deflect and distort and blur the lines of Nature, except for the purposes of base deception? There were of course many in whose case deception was quite unnecessary, but even they had to conform. The Moncrieff sisters, for instance, each rivalling the beauty of the other, would have delighted the eye in any costume ever devised; but such Hebes must unfortunately always be in the minority and it is the weight of votes of those less divinely endowed that settles these matters.

Now, in these latter days of brutal honesty, it is no longer given to the fair ones to deceive the questioning eye of man. No matter what acid strictures the Lauras and Emilys may pass upon the Daphnes and Irises, they must at least admit that they are honest in the admission of their structural defects. There is no " fake " anywhere, except, perhaps, sometimes upon the face. Angularity, flatness, hollow chests, mordant shoulder-blades, bow legs, bandy legs, bolster legs, piano legs and robin legs are all in candid evidence for the hovering male beast to turn up his nose at or admire, according to his taste in anatomy. The Neo-Georgian girl may have faults, but no one can accuse her of being artificial.

Artificiality in dress, as we all know, ever goes hand in hand with artificiality in manners and conduct. It would have been as impossible for the trussed-up Victorian ladies to have talked and acted naturally as it would have been for Adam and Eve to be artificial. They talked as they were dressed—a little unnaturally and always on rigidly conventional lines. Nothing else was expected of them and it is quite certain that nothing else would have met with the approval of their audiences. Unconventionality in those days was assessed very little higher than immorality. It was therefore as certain that small talk on any subject which was started would run straight down the well-trodden track dedicated to it by custom as it was that everyone would say " bless you " when you sneezed. There was no risky deviation into unexplored fields. While the tea-table visitor was ambling conversationally down the familiar track in his endeavour to make himself agreeable, Lady Lucy and Lady Emily would mechanically nod or smile or sigh wherever the indicator of polite usage pointed to a nod or a smile or a sigh. Over anyone who smiled when he should have sighed or who sighed when he should have nodded Society shook its head sadly. He was " odd," and they were not quite sure that he was really " quite nice." Those who ventured on to the grass on either side of the beaten track were looked upon with even greater disfavour. They were more than odd; they were marked " dangerous " and were shunned as potential critics of the admirable dispositions of Providence in the matter of money and property. Providence, according to the established belief of the day, was held to be directly responsible for all our good and ills, even those which might reasonably be considered below its dignity. It was never actually said in so many words that the great and the rich were great and rich because they were the special favourites of Heaven, but it was ceaselessly implied, and there is no doubt that, among a considerable section of Society, it was implicitly believed. How could it be otherwise? If Providence was directly responsible for all our goods and ills, it must clearly be held responsible for our incomes and for our nice, cosy, fifty-room houses.

As a natural consequence of this comfortable but strangely unchristian doctrine, any fault-finding or criticism of existing conditions was held to be verging on impiety. From this it was but a short step to the view that any adverse criticism of people or things was wrong. It was worse than wrong; it was not good form or—as the Mid-Victorians themselves would have greatly preferred to express it—it was not *bon ton.* Even a wet day must not be growled at.

So indiscriminate praise of all things and all people became the fashion. It was, of course, not always easy to put this admirable precept into practice, especially in the case of people, but it was made easier for the well-disposed under a system by which everyone's admitted good qualities were pigeon-holed or docketed, so to speak, for public use. If Lord Augustus Binks's name was mentioned, everyone who had been well brought up knew at once that his two official good points were his poetry and his teeth; and the little party clustered round the hearth would at once start making pleasant allusions to these two assets which, in the ordinary nature of things, became, in the end, worn a little threadbare; but, as they were well-known to be the only two items on the credit side of his balance-sheet, it was hopeless to try to praise him in any other direction; and praised he must be. The rules of polite conversation demanded it.

Now this was all very Christian and nice and charitable, as indeed it was intended to be, but it necessarily imparted to all small talk a note of insincerity which everyone who took part in it was secretly conscious of. When Lady Georgiana (complacently bearing the burden of her own grotesque Hanoverian name) burst into smiling ecstasies over Lord Augustus's teeth and poetry, every member of her audience knew perfectly well that she was really thinking all the time what a greedy, selfish, cross, ill-mannered old bore he was, as indeed they all knew him to be, but they were not allowed by the rules to say so.

If, as occasionally happened, a name slipped into the conversation to which no single good quality could be attached, it became necessary in the interest of convention, to postulate at least one with which to raise him out of the mire of absolute unworthiness, *e. g.* :—

" Sir Marmaduke Brown was staying with us last week," Lady Charlotte would remark.

" Oh yes, what an interesting man he is," would be Lady Clara's comment.

" Yes, and he *really* is very kind-hearted, you know," the stressed " really " being an heroic attempt to explain away the outstanding fact that, to the ordinary senses, Sir Marmaduke Brown was about as mean, ill-natured and disagreeable an old beast as ever snarled biliously across a dinner-table. And everyone in that little Society of praise knew that everyone else present knew him to be all these things. And yet, poor dears, they had to praise him; it was the rule.

In cases where praise really was merited, Society—seeing its way clearly and knowing that the object under discussion was labelled A1—would fairly let itself go and, in so doing, would descend perilously near to the regions of what is vulgarly known as " sloppy gush." They overdid the praise of the good people just as they overdid the praise of the bad people. The whole system, in fact, reeked of humbug and, although it was very sweet sort of humbug and one that had no kind of wickedness behind it, still it could not but have the effect of robbing conversation of much of its interest. The dear Ladies Laura and Emily did not realise that praise, to have any value, must be discriminating. Praise of everyone is praise of no one.

The rule of no criticism applied to things no less than to people, so that, in the end, the critical faculties in the *beau monde* became completely sterilised to the destruction of all original thought. Opinions of things, in common with opinions of people, were not formed from observation, but were taken ready-made " off the peg " and adopted for all time and—as must always happen when this is the case—such opinions, when once adopted, were absolutely impregnable by assault.

As the century advanced to its close, there came a marked relaxation of the cast-iron conventionalities which had so rigidly bound the Mid-Victorians. The members of the old " die-hard " school, about this period, experienced a succession of shocks which staggered them to their check-trousered foundations. First of all the Prince of Wales appeared in a Homburg hat on fields hitherto consecrated to the use of the tall hat only. Hardly had the squadron-leaders of the tall-hat brigade recovered from the effects of this straight left to the jaw before they were still further shaken by two crashing upper-cuts delivered in rapid succession. It was reported on reliable authority that several noblemen of high lineage had ridden in Rotten Row in breeches and boots and it was even whispered that a Peer had been seen in an omnibus. The general demoralization which followed on these first dreadful revelations was never quite recovered from. The flank of the defence had been turned and after this the descent towards the depths was rapid. Exalted personages were seen to walk the streets in short coats, yea, even in tweed suits. Society stared about it helplessly, hardly able to accept the evidence of its eyes. Its most hallowed institutions were being trampled in the mud by the pointed shoes of the *élite* themselves, and the end of all things seemed at hand. But this mood was not permanent. No mood born of hide-bound prejudice ever is. Recruits to the new movement rolled in day by day. The " die-hards " of the *ancien régime* dwindled into a small, disgusted phalanx, splendid in their frock-coated and shepherd's plaid-trousered isolation. But weaker vessels rejoiced in their hundreds at the note of freedom which had been sounded. Why had they for so many grievously uncomfortable years put away from them everything that was sensible? God bless the Prince of Wales!

Then, simultaneously, came the end of the century and the end of the great Queen's long and glorious reign, and with the new century came a new habit of thought, growing and expanding as the century advanced and sweeping before it many a cherished monument of days long past, but still affectionately remembered.

CHAPTER VIII

STET FORTUNA DOMUS

The above three words, it may be explained for the benefit of the semi-educated, are the three words which underlie the crossed arrows and lion rampant which constitute the crest of Harrow School. It is hardly necessary to add, in further explanation, that the words are more in the nature of a hope or a prayer than of a boast, and in that sense may be said faithfully to reflect the Harrovian spirit.

As one who has very many close relations who have received their education at the school by the river, over which Windsor Castle rears its proud crest, it is perhaps only natural that I should look with a tolerant and indulgent eye upon such of my fellow-creatures as think fit to wear black ties relieved by a pale blue diagonal stripe. Only on the second Friday and Saturday in each July does this feeling of compassionate indifference temporarily give way to others of a deadlier nature. On those two days, under the stiff frozen smile of assumed friendliness with which one greets life-long friends who have been educated at a different school from one's own, there lurks a smouldering hatred so hot that at times it sends the hand groping helplessly for the poignard which is not there. This is all as it should be, for, when healthy rivalry dies, good-bye to all enthusiasm or eagerness to excel. So may the two days of polite and restrained hatred long flourish. By the Sunday we are all good friends again, and the tomahawk is buried for another 363 days.

At the moment of writing I am about mid-way through those 363 days, and am therefore so to speak in the Spring Solstice of my rancour, with my tomahawk—which I shall dig up again on the 13th July next—so deeply buried that I find it quite impossible to work myself up into anything approaching the state of acid partisanship in which the writer of a chapter on Harrow should approach his subject.

The particular question as to which it is my present aim to draw comparisons favourable to Harrow and unfavourable to all other schools is the question of school patriotism or *esprit de corps*. I set out on my task without deluding myself for one moment into the belief that I shall establish my point with the bigoted partisans of other educational centres or change any pre-existing opinions. Nathless, to the attempt.

It is claimed, rightly or wrongly, by old Harrovians, that they have been endowed with a larger measure of *esprit de corps* than that which thrills the hearts even of Etonians. They claim that their regard for their old school is less strident, perhaps, but more deep-seated than that of those who have received the rudiments of education and the stripes of correction on the banks of the Thames, and, in support of this contention, they argue that the *esprit de corps* of those who have acquired their learning on the Hill is perpetually being watered and root-dressed and fertilised by the comparative scarcity of the old Harrovians who are met in life's after-walks. The very paucity of their numbers, by comparison with the cohorts of old Etonians amidst whom they jostle down life's highway, binds them together with bonds which are none the less unbreakable for being concealed from the public eye.

After all, he is but a chicken-hearted loon who does not maintain, with all the voice that is his, that the school where he was switched and kicked and grounded in the rudiments of Latin and Greek is the best in the world.

> "Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself has said,
> This is the school where I was switched?"—

and who at the thought does not drop a sentimental tear. Empires may perish and dynasties may totter, but what matter such trifles so long as the nursery of our budding genius continues to flourish. *Stet fortuna domus.*

As to the heroic limits to which Harrovian *esprit de corps* is capable of stretching, the following touching tale should bear sufficient witness.

A certain old Harrovian well past man's allotted span of life, met two of his old school-fellows and contemporaries one morning in the Carlton Club, and, in a sudden spasm of hospitality, invited them to come down and spend a week with him at his place in ——shire. With dim but pleasing memories of his cellar's contents, the two friends gladly accepted the invitation; and then, under the expanding influence of an ante-prandial cocktail, they began recalling incidents of their far-off school-days.

"Wait till I get you down to my place," said the prospective host. "I have something there to show you which I think will really interest you."

A week later the three old friends, all sparkling with mature but none the less genuine animation, were inhaling with common delight the fresh, bracing air of ——shire.

After they had enjoyed a good tea in the garden, the owner of the place asked his guests if they would like to be shown round the house and, on their returning the unusual reply that there was nothing they would like better, he started forth on the weary pilgrimage which has chastened so many of us on Sunday mornings after church. The two guests, after simulating a perfunctory interest in the somewhat mouldy Lares and Penates of their host, with more or less success according to the absence or presence of his mind at the moment, finally arrived at a sort of musty holy of holies, redolent of dry-rot and ancient leather bindings, in which were a number of cabinets filled with trophies of bygone days in the shape of running-cups won at school or college, medals won at golf and—later, and far less valued—cups won at poultry shows and cattle shows.

In the midst of all these memory-stirring relics of the past, stood a little cabinet all by itself, which sheltered from the vulgar touch three birch-rods of ancient build but still in a state of workmanlike preservation.

"There," said the host, pointing proudly to his trophies, "there are the three birch-rods with which I was switched at Harrow. I bought them from Custos, and there they have been ever since."

The two visitors gazed long and sentimentally at these homely links with the past, conjuring up, as they did, happy memories of some of the light-hearted rollicking misdemeanours that had been the means of introducing them to these traditional chasteners of youth.

The elder of the two, a grey-bearded, kindly-faced ship-owner, heaved a long sigh as he recalled how, in the merry long-ago, while projecting across the form-room a little doubled-up roll of paper, held between his teeth, with a piece of elastic, he had, by an unhappy error of aim, caught the form-master on the side of the nose, and had in consequence been summoned to meet the Head Master in the Fourth Form Room, there to expiate the offence at the point of just such a weapon as now faced him from the cabinet. Ah! well, it was worth it, he thought, and with the thought came a long procession of happy shades flitting seductively before his mind, and he heaved another sigh.

"Ah!" he said, turning to his two friends, "how that carries one back to the dear old days beyond recall. Ah me! What wouldn't I give to be switched again?"

There was a long and speaking silence, at the conclusion of which the host said: "Well, my dear fellow, if you really feel like that about it, I don't mind obliging you."

"Are you in earnest?" asked the ship-owner.

"Yes," said the other, "if you are."

"Well do you know, in that case," said his guest, "I really think I must. The past beckons me with a force which is not to be denied."

So saying and without further preamble, he adjusted his costume to the requirements of the situation and, with the ease of long practice, assumed the time-honoured posture of delinquents awaiting correction at the hands of the Head Master. While he was thus engaged, his host, who weighed sixteen stone and boasted an arm like a blacksmith, unlocked the cabinet and selecting the best-preserved relic of the Fourth Form Room delivered himself of four vigorous and well-timed fore-arm drives at the target which his guest offered to his aim.

After a short interval the ship-owner rose a little unsteadily to his feet. His eyes, it was observed, were brimming with emotion.

"Ah! that was glorious!" he observed huskily, as he resumed the conventional attire of the septuagenarian.

Now, could *esprit de corps* go farther or to more literal lengths than these? Can any other school furnish such an example of self-immolation on the altar of academic sentiment?

I think Harrow *esprit de corps* revolves, to a great extent, round its school songs and is kept alive in the breast of old Harrovians by periodical participation in those songs. It is impossible for retired members of the School to gather together, as they do three or four times a year, and join more or less tunefully in the stirring songs of the School, without experiencing a certain sectarian thrill which brings forth fruit in the shape of the immediate purchase of an old Harrovian tie and of a slight rising of the hackles at the sight of the multi-coloured emblem of the Eton Ramblers. That the School songs even have an effect on people in no way connected with the School is beyond dispute. I met last year a lady who had a son at Eton. She had recently, for the first time in her life, been to a Harrow School Concert and she told me, in all seriousness, that had that experience been hers before her son was booked for Eton she would have sent him to the School on the Hill instead. The particular song which was responsible for making so very deep an impression on one whose surrounding atmosphere had always been Etonian was "Five hundred faces." The appeal in this song, she said, was so moving and so irresistible as to stamp the School which had produced it as one to live and die for. For the benefit of those unhappy beings to whom a Harrow School Concert is still an uncut book, the following brief outline of this remarkable song may be given.

A small boy in his first term advances tremulously to the edge of the platform. If no boy in his first term is to be found equal to the exigencies of the song, it is not given, for, with any more mature soloist, the whole point of the song would be lost. The small boy, then, advances and gazes nervously over the top of his music at the "five hundred faces" which are supposed to confront him. As a matter of fact, he confronts no less than double that number, for the song was written in days when the School was smaller and far less accessible by train to old Harrovians and their feminine adjuncts than it is to-day. However, the words remain unchanged and the idea is that the small boy confronts five hundred of his School-fellows and pours forth a tale of woe which is conjured up by the sight of them, and in regard to which he does not look for any sympathy from the five hundred faces. In a thin tremulous pipe, then, he sings the first verse.

"Five hundred faces, and all so strange,
Life in front of me, home behind;
I feel like a waif before the wind,
Tossed on an ocean of shock and change."

Then in a full bass roar, the rest of the School and all the old Harrovians meet his plaint with the answering challenge:

"But the time will come as the years roll by
When your heart will thrill
At the thought of the Hill,
And the day when you came so strange and shy,
And the day when you came so strange and shy."

A number of verses follow, in which the small boy pours forth his varying tale of woe; first it is the early rise in the mornings, then the School lessons, and then the compulsory football, and to each plaint, as it arises, the thousand faces shout forth their answering retort, which varies according to the nature of the complaint. So when he moans over the daily football " with the sky so rainy and fields so wet," he is comforted by the prediction that :

" The time will come as the years roll by
When your heart will thrill
At the thought of the Hill,
And the slippery fields and the rainy sky,
And the slippery fields and the rainy sky."

Then comes the last verse, which looks forward some four or five years to his last term at Harrow; and it was this verse which so stirred the soul of the lady with the son at Eton. The home-sick little boy, smarting under the injustice of kicks from bigger boys, and twisted arms and irksome fagging, to all of which he has so far been a stranger, in his raw ignorance, looks forward eagerly to the day, some years ahead, when he will turn his back for good on all these trials. Then the thousand faces, and more especially such as belong to old Harrovians, assure him from the depths of their experience that :

" The time will come, though you scarce know why,
When your eyes will fill
At the thought of the Hill,
And the wild regret of that last good-bye,
And the wild regret of that last good-bye."

However, without knowledge of the two tunes—the little boy's tune and the chorus tune—it is impossible to get anything like a correct idea of the general effect, and anyone wishing to realise the full power of the song must take off the black tie with the pale blue stripe and go down and hear it sung.

"Here, Sir," is another of the School songs which can boast passages which stir the higher emotions.

"So to-day and oh! if ever
Duty's voice is ringing clear,
Bidding men to strong endeavour,
Be our answer, 'We are here.'
Come what will, good or ill,
We will answer, 'We are here.'"

This verse, as is well known, was sung on Spion Kop by three wounded old Harrovians, for whom the Last Post was already sounding. It was also sung by another small party of old Harrovians who were overtaken by a thick mist and so found themselves in desperate peril during one of the more dangerous rock-climbs in Cumberland and, on this occasion, the words of this verse nerved the entire party to the effort which, in the end, saved the lives of all. There is no sham sentimentality about such a verse as this when it is sung—as it always is sung at Harrow—under the semi-circle of Victoria Cross banners (and they are many) which hang from the walls of the Speech Room.

There is often profit, if not actual relief, in a sudden nose-dive from the sublime to the ridiculous, nor, in this particular instance, need we leave the fields of Harrow vocalism in order to bring about the change. Curiously enough, however, the change calls for a side-step from a secular to a sacred building, for it was in the latter that the incident which I am about to relate took place.

In the merry days of yore to which extended memory carries me back, it was our common and agreeable practice, on the last Sunday of each term, to celebrate and, at the same time, to sanctify, so to speak, our approaching release from the clutches of our preceptors by singing, after the sermon, the good old hymn:

"Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing."

We sang it, according to invariable custom, to a tune which I believe is officially known as the "Vesper hymn," a really magnificent tune, the full possibilities of which I never rightly appreciated till I heard it sung by Flora Woodman in the Albert Hall. It is a tune which starts *in profundis* and there remains throughout four lines of the hymn. Then, without pursuing anything in the nature of an inclined plane, it suddenly shoots up to the highest altitudes to which hymn-singers are ever taken and there remains sufficiently long to exhaust any lungs of ordinary capacity. It was in these few sublime moments that we found our opportunity for giving expression to our pent-up enthusiasm; and, when the words "Those returning, those returning, make more faithful than before" were reached, the vigour of our appeal to Heaven was really remarkable. Boys who had never sung before and to whom music was a sealed book, now stretched their mouths to the utmost limits allowed by Nature and let forth a deafening volume of rich, even if somewhat irregular, sounds. It was the aim of every well-disposed boy to burst, if he could, a blood-vessel in the throat during the rendering of these last few words. Every face was scarlet and distorted into unaccustomed, and none too becoming, shapes; knotted veins stood out on every boyish brow. The windows rattled and the gas-jets bent to the storm.

The singing of this particular hymn in this particular way had, from time immemorial, been one of the most cherished of the School's traditions. On the night following the singing of this hymn there was always an animated but friendly debate as to whether we had broken all records in the way of noise or not. There were rumours of one Summer term, some years before, when all previous efforts had been eclipsed and, as some held, all subsequent ones. It was the ambition of every boy whose soul was not destitute of pride, to be a contributing factor to the breaking of this past record, even if victory entailed the rupture of some part of his anatomy.

It was therefore with feelings of pain and shock almost too great to be described that we learned, towards the close of one Summer term, that the edict had gone forth from Dr. Butler that the old tune, in which we had all joined so heartily for so many years, had been condemned and that, for the future, the " Dismissal " hymn was to be sung to a different tune. Whether it was that Dr. Butler resented as indecent our manifestations of joy at the prospect of turning our backs on him and his underlings, or whether it was that he thought our invocation of the divine blessings was in too strident a key, I cannot say, but, in any case, a black mark was placed against the old tune and a new one was substituted for it of which the cadences lent themselves less readily to enthusiasm.

This unexpected frontal attack on the part of the Head Master clearly called for a flank movement of some sort from the School, and it was at once evident that there was only one form of counter-stroke open to us. By means of those mysterious wireless channels through which School-boy *communiqués* reach their goal, the edict went forth that the new tune was to be left severely alone. Dr. Butler might have it in his power to deprive us of one of our traditional pleasures, but it was not within his power to make us sing a tune we did not want to sing. You may lead your guest to the water, but you cannot make him drink, and no less true is it that you may pipe an unpopular tune, but you cannot make your chorus sing.

We resolved, then, on a policy of masterly inactivity, and in this resolve we marched firmly to Chapel. With pleasant thrills of anticipation radiating through our youthful organisms we sat through the sermon, and when Dr. Butler in his silvery tones announced "Hymn 222," the excitement among the rank and file of the School almost reached breaking-point. The excitement grew and grew as the organ, according to custom, played the first line of the tune, and then we all rose to our feet and stood in a dead silence, broken only towards its conclusion by one reproachful cough from the Head Master, while John Farmer played through the first verse. Our success was almost painful in its completeness. More, however, and better still was to follow. John Farmer, completely mystified by the lack of response to his accompaniment from the body of the Chapel, started on the second verse, and as he approached the end of the first line, we became excitedly aware that the Head of the School, a worthy and scholastic youth held in high esteem by the authorities, was making a conscientious attempt to save the honour of the School by singing the second verse of the hymn as a solo. Now the Head of the School, as has already been said, was a youth of high scholarly attainments and one for whom the many unnecessary tenses of τύπτω had no terrors whatever, but, among his many accomplishments, he did not include that of differentiating nicely between E flat and E natural, and on all occasions when the point was in doubt he had an unfortunate predilection for the former. He had, in short, not been blessed by Nature with a sense of tune. However, he was

Head of the School, Dr. Butler had coughed reproachfully, and it was up to him to respond to the best of his ability to the appeal conveyed in that cough. He accordingly cleared his throat and, in the language of the huntsman, gave tongue. A painful conflict between John Farmer in the organ-loft and the Head of the School in the Chancel then ensued. Each had his own idea of what the new tune was and each gave his own rendering of it, quite undisturbed by the contrary interpretation of the other, while the School stood and listened in silent ecstasy.

I believe that the hero of this story, who was Head of the School at the time of Dr. Butler's great revolutionary move, subsequently won the Victoria Cross in India, but I am quite sure that, in his own estimation, his solo in the School Chapel will always stand out as a deed of daring far more deserving of the Cross for Valour than his leading of the storming-party in the Punjaub.

All this deals with prehistoric times and I believe that the substituted tune has now taken definite root and is meekly accepted by the School of to-day in happy ignorance of the tumult that arose when the old one was torn up by the roots and the present one planted in its place. I am very confident, however—although I have not been in the School Chapel on the last Sunday of the term for very many years—that there is a good deal less fervour over the singing of the "Dismissal" hymn nowadays than there was in the long ago, when we used to run the risk of rupture in order to do honour to the old tune.

With the march of time there comes, very naturally, the funeral of many ancient institutions. I took part, as just described, in the last singing of the Vesper Hymn at Harrow and I was also a witness of the last official fight which ever took place on the old Milling Ground—the historic battlefield on which Lord Palmerston, Lord Cardigan and Anthony Trollope had all settled differences with certain of their school-fellows. The last fight, and the one which I witnessed, was between two big Fifth Form boys named Gauntlett and Macaulay. The cause of war was that Gauntlett had pushed Macaulay into Ducker with all his clothes on, and before the latter could extricate himself from the depths Gauntlett had discreetly left the scene of action. For such an outrage, where Fifth Form boys were concerned, there was but one remedy. Small boys might have settled it in the streets by kicking one another on the shins or by throwing each other's hats over spiked railings. But in the case of Fifth Form boys any such undignified action was not to be thought of. Macaulay's seconds accordingly waited on Gauntlett and their challenge was accepted, as indeed it had to be according to the unwritten laws of the School.

The fight took place after first School one Summer morning when all the world was at breakfast, or should have been at breakfast; but as a matter of fact, very few boys in the School had any breakfast that day, except such as they munched out of paper bags supplied by Fuller or Winkley. Instead, they crowded in their hundreds into the Milling Ground or lined the low wall of the School Yard that overlooked it. I, a very small boy at the time, was lucky enough to secure a front seat in the Dress Circle, so to speak, or, in other words, I was in the front rank of those who looked over the wall and right down on to the scene of the combat. Old Sam Hoare, the Custos of the day, was the official referee, but otherwise the School staff was unrepresented. One or two Masters, impelled by a discreet curiosity, came and glanced for a few interested minutes over the wall but they quickly melted away and left the matter—as was very right and proper, according to the School etiquette of those days—in the hands of the boys.

The fight itself was a most determined and sanguinary affair, and lasted a full fifteen rounds. Both boys were big and burly and full of courage. It was for the most part a case of continued attack on both sides with very little science and no attempt at defence, with the result that, before the fight ended, both boys' faces were almost unrecognisable. It was not a pretty sight. Finally Gauntlett, who had had the worst of it for the last five or six rounds, but who had kept up his end with indomitable courage, was knocked out, and the victor, with his face a mass of bleeding pulp, was led triumphantly away by his admiring friends.

Both boys had, of course, to attend second School, and the sight of their disfigured faces decided the authorities, very properly, to sound the knell of official fights in the Milling Ground. As far as small boys were concerned the institution was a good one, for small boys are not able to hurt one another much, and bigger boys were always present to see fair play, and generally to conduct the business on proper lines, but in the case of big boys of seventeen or thereabouts a fight without gloves is a beastly sight.

The only fight that I myself ever had at Harrow was unofficial and quite spontaneous. It was with a boy named Behrens and took place in the School Yard. The original cause of offence, as far as I can remember, arose from some derogatory remarks on my part as to the pattern of Behrens' trousers. He did not take my criticisms in good part and retorted with a choice selection of the rude signs by means of which small boys signify their contempt for other small boys.

These rude signs wounded me to the core, and I squared up to Behrens in provocative fashion. For a minute or two we glared at one another in the usual way and then someone delivered the first blow and we were at it, hammer and tongs. No great damage was done on either side and we were both enjoying ourselves enormously when some officious big boys interfered and separated us. Behrens, I remember, had landed two good hooks to the jaw, while I depended more on a straight left and was holding my right in reserve for a knock-out blow. I think I was ahead on points when we were separated, but possibly Behrens thinks otherwise.

The conditions of School life at Harrow in those days were so immeasurably different from those which exist to-day that the School scarcely seems the same. We were so inaccessible by rail that the sight of visitors from the outer world very rarely relieved the monotony of the long terms. On the rare occasions when friends and relations did come down to see us, they usually drove the ten miles from London. In the Summer things brightened up a bit, for then certain Harrow enthusiasts would drive their coaches down, loaded up with cargoes of parents. The most frequent and popular of these coachmen were Lord Spencer, Lord Sefton, Lord Londesborough and Lord Ebury. My father always came down on Lord Spencer's coach and, on these occasions, expectation ran high among such scholars as had the honour of his acquaintance, for Lord Spencer was the best " tip " known to the boys on the Hill, and our expectant palms were never disappointed.

Do people tip boys in these days? I suppose so, and yet it is hard to say. Conditions are so altered. In the days when the visit of a parent or an uncle or a red-bearded peer was an annual, or, at the very most, a termal affair, it was quite fitting and proper that such a red-letter day should be commemorated by the distribution of largesse. But nowadays, when the Metropolitan Railway has brought the Harrow Cricket ground within half an hour of Grosvenor Square and when visitors in motor-cars pour down weekly or bi-weekly in their hundreds, the ethics of boy-tipping clearly call for a certain readjustment.

In the old days any tall-hatted visitor who went away as rich as he came ranked very low indeed in the estimation of the boys. If a similar rule was applicable to present-day visitors to the Hill, there can be little doubt that such visitors would welcome in preference a shilling rise in the Income Tax.

CHAPTER IX

SOME THOUGHTS OF EATON HALL

THE intention of these pages, or, at any rate, of some of these pages, is to draw certain comparisons between the state of Society in England at different periods during the last hundred and twenty years; and there is also an underlying intention to suggest that, during those hundred and twenty years, we have shed many customs and affectations which were in reality mere relics of a semi-barbaric outlook on life and which have given way under the pressure of a gradual advance in enlightenment. In the second chapter, an outline sketch has been given of a great Georgian aristocrat and of his manner of life, ostentatious, splendiferous and—according to present-day standards—undeniably vulgar. Whether my good great-grandfather was absolutely typical of the *fin de siècle* aristocracy is hard to say. From the evidence of extracts from contemporary Memoirs, it would appear that—even in his own day—he was held to be a bit of an anachronism, or, in other words, he was held to be more typical of the generation which had preceded him than of his own.

If we jump from the end of the eighteenth century to Mid-Victorian days and, when we get there, cast our eyes about us for a great aristocrat typical of his own times, it would probably be impossible to light on a better subject for the purpose than Hugh Grosvenor, third Marquis and first Duke of Westminster, for he was not only a great aristocrat in every sense of the word, but he was also typically Mid-Victorian from the shape of his hat to the cut of his boots. Moreover he built that strange, Gothic, pinnacled pile known as Eaton Hall, which no one but a Mid-Victorian could possibly have been guilty of. However, having committed the offence, he mitigated it to the best of his power by living a life which was opposed in every way to the character of the building in which he lived; that is to say that, while the building was in the worst possible taste, the life that its owner lived in it was, in every way, exactly the reverse. By comparison with the *ménage* of Don Magnifico at the Priory, that at Eaton Hall in the 'eighties was as a bush of Abel Chatenay roses is to a bed of scarlet geraniums. The number of servitors attached to the establishment was probably equal to and, possibly, greater than the number of those who waited on Magnifico or on Lord Egremont or the Duke of Dorset in the days of the later Georges. The number of those who sheltered under the roof of Eaton Hall on the occasion of a big party was probably not far short of the hundred and twenty who enjoyed Magnifico's hospitality at the Priory during Lady Morgan's stay and, if the occupants of the cluster of little Cheshire-built, black and white houses, which form the outworks of the big house, be included, it is probable that the number would even have exceeded the hundred and eighty who—as Lady Bessborough tells us—on one occasion found lodging under the roof of Chatsworth during the reign of the fifth Duke of Devonshire and his beautiful Duchess of Gainsborough fame. But there the parallel ends. Of the "prodigious pride" which Horace Walpole accuses Lord Egremont of having inherited from his grandfather, the Duke of Somerset, and to which other of his contemporaries could lay equal claim, there was to be found no trace in the representative of the same class eighty years later on, or at any rate, there was none in the particular representative whom I have made bold to select for purposes of comparison. Here, in place of a semi-barbaric potentate, rejoicing in "elegance" and "style," we find a quiet and dignified gentleman, entertaining on a truly royal scale but with no more beating of drums and flourish of trumpets than if he had been the local rector entertaining the *élite* of the village. The art of behaving like a gentleman has certainly made gigantic strides since the days of George III, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the conception of how a gentleman should behave has made gigantic strides. "Elegance" and "style" have ceased to be the first aim of England's nobility. It is difficult to believe that people who aimed at such things could have laid claim to the first qualifications of a gentleman, as we now understand the term. Certainly the Duke aimed at neither and it was probably because he aimed at neither that he presented to my mind—and not to mine alone but to that of many others—the most perfect picture of what an English aristocrat should be and of what an English gentleman should be. The two terms should be synonymous, but it is the sad, sad truth that they are not always synonymous and, when we find the two qualifications combined in one man, then, as a nation, we may justly feel proud of such a man and pay our humble tribute to his memory. And we do so none the less readily and with no less enthusiasm because of the fact that he had the advantage of having at his side a duchess as charming and as gracious and beautiful as, and probably—if we were in a position to make strict comparisons—far more so than, the three much-vaunted duchesses of the late eighteenth century, they of Rutland, Devonshire and Gordon. Unfortunately for us and our descendants, the days of Queen Victoria did not give birth to a Reynolds, a Gainsborough or a Romney whose brush was capable of sending down to succeeding generations glorified and idealised portraits of the land's great ladies; but, had those immortal artists lived in the summer and autumn days of the Queen, and had they (which is extremely improbable) been encouraged in their artistic conceptions of England's fair ladies of that period, we should to-day have portraits on the walls of our great country houses which would have put most of the Georgian ladies into the deep, dark shade. But, alas! they were not; and so the ladies of wool and horse-hair head-dresses will always be stared at by picture-gazers with awe and admiration, while the more worthy subjects of our own earlier days will go down to posterity, if not in absolute caricature, at all events in the stiff, unlovely guise to which the wooden art of the period in which they lived condemned them.

The Duke himself, as I remember him, was a man of quiet, attractive manner in which dignity was tempered by an ever-present but submerged sense of humour, lurking continually about the eyes and mouth. He had a certain number of quaint idiosyncrasies which lent him distinction as well as character. He gave away more in charity than any other man in England, but, at the same time, kept the eye of frugal scrutiny on the issue of such homely commodities as candles, soap and sugar, for, as he himself would put it, he liked giving, but particularly disliked being "done," and he was fully alive to the melancholy fact that dukes with large incomes and half-closed eyes are, as a rule, most whole-heartedly and systematically " done " by those to whom they pay wages.

One of the peculiarities of Eaton in the old days was that no one was ever asked there to shoot, that is to say the subject of shooting was never mentioned in the invitation. It was the habit of other kind people to invite their winter guests to visit them " for some shooting," but in an invitation to Eaton these last three words were always omitted. If people liked to come for the pleasant society of their host and hostess, and of their host's and hostess's children, they would be welcome, but of supplementary bribes there were none. The wise and prudent, however, and those who knew the Duke's little ways, were careful to arrive with the full equipment of the pheasant-shooter.

At the date of my first invitation to Eaton I was a youthful and unsated enthusiast on the subject of shooting, and I was not slow to notice, with a certain sense of disquietude, the omission of the usual bait in the wording of the invitation. Willie Bromley-Davenport, with whom I was staying at the time at Capesthorne and who knew the ways of Eaton upside down, laughed at my fears and advised me, whatever I did, not to arrive there without my guns and a substantial supply of cartridges. This advice I followed and, in due course, found myself, in company with many other guests, being conveyed from Chester Station to Eaton Hall in one out of a long procession of the Duke's carriages. There was no whisper that night of any shooting on the following day, but, coached as I had been in the ways of the house, I did not allow that to interfere with my appearing next morning at breakfast in knickerbockers and shooting-boots.

Breakfast passed off uneventfully and without the slightest indication from the Duke as to the day's routine. A whispered and nervous conversation took place immediately after breakfast between myself and such of the other guests as shared my eagerness to leave at the end of the visit with appreciably fewer cartridges than had been brought. No member of the conference, however, proved to be in a position to shed on the others any directly illuminating ray of hope and we eventually dispersed to our various pursuits in some despondency of mind.

About half-past ten I was dejectedly smoking a cigarette in the hall, having by that time definitely abandoned all hope of shooting—for the usual hour for starting on such expeditions was well past—when the Duke strolled dreamily up to me and said : " Brought a gun ? " I replied brightly that I had. As a matter of fact I had brought two. " Care to come out and see if we can pick up a pheasant or two ? " he continued. I said that I was even prepared to do that. " Then we will start from the front door in a quarter of an hour," he said and walked away. I had visions of the Duke and myself poking about in hedge-rows with a spaniel and coming proudly home with a couple of cock-pheasants in our hands. But what actually happened was very wide of this. At the appointed hour I found a large brake waiting at the door in which the Duke and five other guns besides myself took their seats, and off we set at a very fast trot. After a short drive the brake pulled up some two hundred yards distant from a fair-sized wood out of which pheasants were flying in considerable numbers. Keepers were in attendance to guide us to our allotted posts, which were all marked and numbered and stamped, so to speak, with our names. The organisation was perfect. The moment I had disclosed my name, the keeper attached to me told me that I was No. 3 and pointed to a spot some two hundred yards distant which was marked by a cleft stick bearing a card and over which an uninterrupted stream of pheasants were making their hurried and, so far, uneventful exit. I snatched up a gun and did that two hundred yards in fairly good time, followed, at a considerable interval, by my short-winded and perspiring loader. To right and left of me I could see other eager enthusiasts, goaded on by the sight of the swarms of fugitive pheasants that were disappearing into the offing, running for all they were worth to intercept them and, in some cases, firing as they ran. However, eventually we and, a little later, our loaders arrived panting at our posts, and after that both guns and loaders were kept fairly busy for the rest of the morning. We went home to luncheon having shot a thousand pheasants in two hours, and that concluded the day's sport. Such was then the custom at Eaton. The Duke never shot after luncheon, but, while he was shooting, he liked to be busy. I learned afterwards that the keepers had orders to start driving the pheasants at eleven o'clock to the minute, irrespective of whether the guns were in their places or not. As a matter of fact, on the particular morning which I have been describing, one of the guests was unpunctual at the start and lost us five minutes, so that when the scene opened at eleven, according to orders, the principal actors were not in their places. It didn't matter. No one was in the least upset; least of all the Duke. We shot quite enough as it was and the rest lived to fight another day.

One of the special features of the Duke's shooting arrangements was that he allowed no "tips" to his keepers, his contention being that he did not wish his guests to pay anything at all for the privilege of shooting his pheasants or other game. The adequate remuneration of the keepers was his affair. There can be no doubt that, in principle, he was right. The "tip" system, in the field of shooting, is a relic of a custom which has become obsolete in other fields of domestic enterprise.

In the days when Ralph, first Duke of Montagu, dispensed magnificent hospitality at Montagu House, his palatial residence in Bloomsbury, one of his favourite guests was Pope, the poet. Pope was a poor man and he found the five guineas which he had, on each occasion, to distribute among the Duke's servants too much for his slender purse. He accordingly wrote the Duke a letter in which he remarked jokingly that he would be reluctantly forced to decline all future invitations to Montagu House unless each invitation was accompanied by a remittance of five guineas so as to enable him to fulfil his obligations to the Duke's servants. The reply was a note containing five guineas and an invitation to dinner on the following night, and every subsequent invitation to the Poet Laureate was similarly sweetened.

The Duke has been described by Swift as "as arrant a rogue as any of his time," but he was evidently an open-handed rogue as well as one of undoubted resource and ingenuity, as was proved by the determination with which he married, in quick succession, two of the greatest heiresses in England, and with their revenues built his two palatial residences of Montagu House, Bloomsbury, and Boughton House, Kettering. His second wife was the Duchess of Albemarle, who was, by a long way, the greatest heiress in the Kingdom, but as mad as Bedlam. All her many suitors had been ignominiously dismissed because they were not reigning sovereigns, for nothing less did the proud Duchess intend to marry. Montagu, however, who wanted her money badly, was not a man to be defeated by any such petty prejudice as this, so he dressed himself up as the Emperor of China, and with all his servants in Chinese costumes, and a tremendous parade of Oriental palanquins and banners, he payed a visit to the haughty lady and laid his bogus crown at her feet. She promptly and proudly accepted him and they lived happily ever after, for he spent her money and she, up to the day of her death, believed herself to be the Empress of China and made all the servants approach her on their bended knees.

The dinner-tax to servants dwindled in severity after the days of Ralph, Duke of Montagu, but even in the days of the Regency it was not dead, and every diner-out had to present the butler with a guinea on leaving. This custom is now no more and right gladly do we hail its decease, but in justification of the old practice it must be borne in mind that the physical exertions of a butler in the old days, when everybody got drunk, must have been very heavy indeed and worthy of much monetary recompense. For instance, a party of ten six-bottle men must have kept the butler and all his myrmidons climbing up and down the cellar stairs all the night through. And then the drawing of all the corks! and the filling of several hundred glasses! probably followed by the bodily conveyance of one or two of the merry guests to their coaches! Oh yes, I think the Regency butlers fairly earned their guineas. But in these dull days, when no one ever drinks more than a bottle and when guests stroll to their carriages with unimpaired equilibrium, the special fee has been very properly dropped. It is no longer earned.

Whether the tipping of keepers should be allowed to die out, as the tipping of butlers has done, is a debatable point. There is no logical justification for making a guest contribute to one branch of his entertainment and not to others. That was the Duke of Westminster's view. None the less it is not to be denied that it would have achieved the same end and, at the same time, raised his guests in the estimation of the keepers if, instead of abolishing tipping, he had enclosed with each invitation a cheque for £5 for distribution among his keepers, as the old Duke of Montagu did in the case of Pope. For there are few of us who do not welcome the opportunity of giving a good keeper some practical token of our appreciation of his efforts to provide us with entertainment. No doubt the old topers had just the same feeling with regard to the cork-drawing butlers whose energy helped them to their final position under the dining-room table. They had acquitted themselves well in their special department and were therefore deserving of a tip. Nevertheless, it is greatly to be suspected that the tipping of keepers is the survival of a system which, when shooting was in its infancy, was very greatly abused. Nowadays there is no abuse of the practice, for conditions have completely changed. The guns generally agree among themselves as to what should be a suitable fee and make no individual departure from the sum agreed upon. In Early and Mid-Victorian days, from all accounts, the custom would appear to have been very different. Then the tip was usually—or, at any rate, often—given *before* the shoot took place and was in the nature of a bribe to the keeper to put the prodigal tipster in better places than those enjoyed by guns who tendered humbler offerings. Childish and quite contemptible jealousies, worthy of private school-boys rather than of grown men, raged between rival sportsmen. According to John Leech, they were perpetually quarrelling and bickering with one another over the honour of having killed some individual bird. "My bird, Sir, I believe." "No, Sir, my bird," etc., etc. One cannot believe that Leech drew entirely on his imagination for these scenes. In fact, it is a matter of common knowledge that he did not. One has heard stories without end—and first-hand stories, too—on the subject of the incredible jealousies that ravaged the hearts of sportsmen of fifty and sixty years ago. They all appear to have been rivals and antagonists during a day's shooting, instead of being partners and confederates, as is the case now. A sportsman of the 'sixties would almost sink into the ground with shame if his "eye was wiped" by a neighbouring gun. No greater degradation could, it was held, overtake any member of a shooting party. Now all that nonsense is dead and buried. The modern idea is for all the guns to co-operate with one another and help one another to the utmost extent possible. Nothing gives greater satisfaction to the man who has missed a bird, and probably wounded it, than to see it finished off by somebody else.

So the original *raison d'être* of the tip to keepers has passed away and the present system is, in great part, only a survival of an old abuse which, in any case, would not be possible of practice in these days when the owner, as a rule, places his own guns and does not leave it all to the keeper as the helpless Mid-Victorians did. The "tip" is now no more than a friendly recognition of the skill and energy displayed by a keeper, and where real efficiency is shown, it is a pleasure to give it.

No substitute for the direct tip has ever been known to work satisfactorily. At Escrick, some years ago, the system was adopted of placing a box in the house into which departing sportsmen were requested to place the guerdon which they would otherwise have pressed into the surreptitiously extended palm of the keeper. The idea was to make an equitable distribution, at the end of the season, among the various keepers employed, whose "beats" sometimes so overlapped one another as to make direct tipping difficult. When the box was opened, at the end of the season, ten shillings was found in it instead of the £50 or so which should by rights have been there!

It must be owned that the keepers at Eaton—despite the fact that they were entirely paid by their employer—were as civil to his non-tipping guests as any keepers could possibly be. They were all dressed in picturesque green coats and red waistcoats, both plentifully adorned with brass buttons, and they wore big square "wide-awake" hats which lent them a fitting dignity and grandeur. Part of the covert-shooting equipment consisted of a beautiful pack of Clumber spaniels who officiated as beaters. It was fascinating to see them work. Their controller carried a long-thonged and formidable-looking whip, more for moral effect than for use, as the dogs were so wonderfully trained that they turned the eye of studied indifference even on the retreating white scut of a rabbit.

On Sunday mornings we all went to church in the Duke's high-roofed Gothic Chapel with its elaborate and tireless carillon, which played loud and unappreciated music every quarter of an hour through the still watches of the night. In the afternoon the great attraction was the home-paddocks, where three Derby winners and many other minor celebrities of the race-course grew fat in domestic retirement. What pride was ours when Shotover or even the great Bend Or himself condescended to nibble carrots from the palms of our hands with no more hauteur than if they had been costermongers' donkeys who had carried 'Arriet to victory in a hundred yards race on 'Ampstead 'Eath!

Some of the parties given at Eaton were of giant proportions and, as may be supposed, included many charming and interesting guests who did not shoot or hunt, but to whom it was a manifest pleasure to talk; and it was always a matter of interesting speculation as to whether fate or the friendly offices of the Duchess would provide one at dinner with a congenial neighbour. On one occasion fate must have been unkind, for the Duchess never was, and I found myself seated next to a damsel on whom my conversational efforts fell as raindrops fall on the Mid-Atlantic Ocean. They made no appreciable effect. I went through the whole gamut of conversational topics, as laid down in the unwritten laws of dinner-table-talk—theatres, Royal Academy, weather, food, gardening and even religion, but without raising even a momentary gleam of interest in the bright brown eyes of the nymph whom I had armed in to dinner. Just as I was on the point of throwing up the sponge and abandoning my official property to her right-hand neighbour, a footman approached and handed me, on a salver, a diminutuve scrap of paper tightly rolled up. Very much mystified I opened it surreptitiously under cover of the table-cloth and found scrawled on it, in pencil, the three words, "Try the Zoo." I glanced up the long table with its fringe of distinguished and busily-engaged diners and, at the far, far end, caught for one second the laughing eye of Lady Meg (now Marchioness of Cambridge) the charming and most understanding daughter of the house. Then I knew. I pocketed my scrap of paper and, with new hope in my heart, returned to the attack of my partner.

"Do you ever go to the Zoo?" I inquired with a bright smile. Instantly into the lovely but, so far, somewhat wandering eye of my neighbour there leapt a gleam of real live interest. Yes, she went regularly every Sunday afternoon to the Zoo; and did I know Flossie, the giraffe? and Herbert, the hippopotamus? She always called him Herbert because he was so exactly like her uncle Herbert—and the sea-lions! and the polar bears! and the dear, dear penguins! For the rest of the meal I hardly got in a word, so ceaseless was the wagging of my fair neighbour's tongue. Oh! it was so nice to sit next someone who *understood* and who wasn't ashamed of taking an interest in the poor vultures and hyenas. Altogether I had a most amazing success and it was with an undisguised sigh of regret that my fair partner had to break off in the middle of a vivid description of the clever way in which Christopher, the camel, could scratch his left ear with his right hind-foot. But the Duchess had given the signal and she had to go. She threw me one long, loving, lingering glance as she tore herself away. "I should love to talk to you about the llamas later on, if I get a chance," she whispered over her shoulder as she swept from the room in the wake of all the proud dames who were racing for the honour of getting first out of the room.

I thanked Lady Meg most whole-heartedly after dinner for her timely and charitable suggestion.

"What made you think of it?" I asked. "Well," she said, "I saw that you were in trouble and, curiously enough, I was not much happier myself with Lord Nicholas Noodle. But we got on splendidly over the Zoo, so I thought that it might help you too."

I vowed eternal gratitude and that this was no mere empty form of words should be proved by the way in which the recollection of that friendly helping hand held out to a lame dog struggling dismally with a most impassable stile has kept its place in my memory through all the intervening years. But I never got that story about the llamas.

CHAPTER X

THE RAUMA

It is on record in the annals of Norway that, somewhere about the year one, the late Mr. Bromley Davenport, while touring the country in search of scenery and rest, in the company of a genial and red-whiskered friend, came upon a swift, limpid river whose waters were the colour of an aquamarine and which flowed through gorges of surpassing grandeur. Mr. Davenport was, before all things, a sportsman and, like all true sportsmen, an enthusiastic fly-fisher. Said he to his friend: "Surely there ought to be salmon in a river that looks like that?" The friend was doubtful. Salmon were well-known to be Scotch. They only understood Doric and they only swallowed salmon-flies because the colour of these blended tastefully with those of the tartan. What they really went to the sea for was to visit their whisky cellars at the bottom of the Atlantic. It was absurd to suppose that anyone could catch a salmon in a country where a kilt had never been seen. Mr. Davenport, however, was not wholly convinced by these arguments, specious as they might appear, and, with a view to putting his own theory to the test, he borrowed one or two choice tufts from his friend's whiskers, and attached them with the aid of some thread to the shank of a bent pin. A young ash sapling was then severed from its roots with a pocket-knife and a ball of thin twine soon connected the bent pin, and its covering of red whisker, with the thinner end of the sapling. Armed with this impromptu "apparatus," as a Scottish gillie of mine used to describe fishing-tackle, Mr. Davenport now advanced to the edge of an attractive-looking pool, and with a deft flick of the wrist, shot the whiskered pin into mid-stream. Hardly had it touched the water before there was a tremendous swirl, as the broad, silvery back of a salmon appeared for one second and then plunged down out of sight. The sapling bent double and then righted itself as the twine parted and the fish, with a defiant flourish of its broad tail, disappeared into the pale-green depths of the river. The experiment, however, had served its purpose. Mr. Davenport lost no time in getting in touch with a local land-agent and, before he returned to England, had become the registered owner of the land on both sides of the river throughout its fishable length. As to how he returned the following year with the full equipment of the salmon-fisher, and of the wonderful sport that ensued, are not these things written in the book of the chronicles of the Rauma, which, bound up with other delightful chronicles, under the title of "Sport," have been given to the world by the fascinating pen of the late Mr. Davenport? This little book "Sport" was one which, during my half-fledged days, I used to devour with open-mouthed, never-flagging joy. The whole book was—and is—absorbing in its interest, whether the topic discussed be Hunting, Shooting, Deer-stalking or Fishing, but to my mind, by far the most graphic and exciting episode in the book was that in which the author described how he had hooked, wrestled with and lost a monster salmon in the ice-cold waters of the Rauma. With other, but inferior, monsters he had however experienced better luck, and eagerly did I devour his thrilling stories of the silvery salmon of mighty bulk and Herculean pulling-power which he had lured from their native element in a far-off enchanted land. Colonel Crealocke's powerful illustrations—fantastically wide of the truth as I afterwards found them to be—none the less lent an artificial reality to the descriptive scenes which so enthralled me. Little did I then guess that it would one day be my happy lot to re-enact these very scenes in the first person, and yet so it was.

When I first trod the sacred, but dismally Gothic and—to me—coldly unsympathetic precincts of the House of Commons, among others—besides myself—to whom the experience was new, was Willie Bromley-Davenport, Member for Macclesfield and worthy son of the author of "Sport." Having a number of tastes in common and a number of distastes—among the latter being a strong distaste for listening to long prosy speeches—we soon struck up a friendship which had many pleasant aspects, but which did not, I am afraid, always tend to bring us into high favour with the Whips of the party.

One hot and dreary summer, when our bodies were worn out with perpetual all-night sittings and our minds with listening to pompous and interminable speeches, Willie Davenport proposed that I should turn my back on the musty home of British legislators and accompany him to Norway, there to flog the silvery waters of the river Rauma. Was it in human nature to resist such an invitation? The Parliamentary Session was of course in full swing and we were both on the Government side, but the Government had a substantial majority and there was quite a sufficient number of members, to whom the atmosphere of the House of Commons was dearer than any waters of Babylon, ready and anxious to keep them in office. Would I go? Well, of course there was but one answer. As in duty bound, we tried our very utmost to get "pairs" for the six weeks' absence which we contemplated, but we tried in vain. The only thing, then, was to go without pairs. We suffered at that time under the tyranny of the most charming and irresistible band of Whips that ever barred the swing-doors through which speech-sick M.P.s try to stagger forth into the outer air. Sidney Herbert, Willie Walrond, Arthur Hill, Lewisham and Herbert Maxwell formed a quintet whose outstanding success as shepherds of the party was mainly due to the delightful personality of all five. It was sad to have to offend such real good fellows, but, after all, the Government majority was safe, Willie Davenport and I were both fagged out with constant public speaking in the country (for which we were both very freely used by the Whips), and before us lay the visions of the translucent waters of the Rauma and its constant but short-lived run of silvery fly-loving salmon. There could be but one issue. We went. We felt at first like naughty school-boys running away from school, but that feeling soon passed. The Whips—as in duty bound, I suppose—pursued us with bitter reproaches, followed by peremptory commands to return at once to our duties in the division lobbies. Ha! ha! was it likely? By the time their angry despatch reached us, we were already in the enchanted valley of the Romsdaal, with the soda-water-bottle coloured Rauma bubbling and rippling and foaming poetically at our feet. Nothing short of sheer brute force, armed to the teeth, and assisted by ropes and manacles, would have dragged us away from our heavenly surroundings. With feelings slightly ruffled by the fury of the official attack, we laid our heads together and, after a day or two's hard brainwork, despatched in reply a joint poetical Note in sixteen stanzas.

The greater part of this spirited composition is, I am afraid, lost to the world for ever, but a few of the stanzas still stick in my memory as anything that rhymes is apt to do. We began by sarcastically reminding the Whips that one or two members of the Government had themselves been abroad (on supposed sick leave) for some months during the earlier part of the Session and that the absence of these had not called forth so much as a murmur of reproach.

" For these no wiggings were held in store,
  No paragraphs in the papers
State how they cut on a distant shore
  Unparliamentary capers.

But if for months we have spent our strength
  In elbowing through Divisions,
And arguing Bills of ungainly length
  Full of wearisome provisions,
And lavishing money and health and time
  In endeavours to teach the masses,
(One moment, I beg, while I think of a rhyme,)
  What the truth about Miss Cass* is.

And if after months of a fruitless quest,
  For Government approbation,
Our paralysed brains require a rest
  From the worries of legislation,
At once the Government Whips go mad
  With gibbering indignaton
Because to our search for health we add
  An innocent recreation."

Our epic finished up with the threat, in certain eventualities, of " humble and meek resignation."

In spite of the superlative lyrical merit of the earlier part of our Note, I think the last line was the only one that had any real effect. It so happened that both Willie Davenport and myself represented constituencies which would have been inevitably lost to the party had we resigned. No man but my host would have had a hundred to one chance of winning, or even of holding, Macclesfield, while it may with equal truth be said that no one except one of my brothers or myself would have had a dog's chance in North Tyrone. As my three brothers were all in Parliament representing other constituencies, I was, in point of fact, the only available person who could have held the seat. Thenceforward we fished in peace.

---

* A *cause célèbre* in the 'eighties.

On our return to England some six weeks later, Lord Lewisham—one of the Whips—spoke in pleasant and appreciative terms of our poetical *communiqué* as a whole, but took exception to the words " gibbering indignation." How, he argued, could we, a thousand miles distant, possibly know whether the Whips were gibbering or not? He added, in parenthesis, that we were not worth gibbering over. We over-rated both our own Parliamentary value and the hysterical tendencies of Whips. Gibber indeed!

It is many years since I last read that fascinating little book " Sport," and the inimitable descriptions which it contains of the Romsdaal valley, and of the immediate surroundings of the white wooden house at Fiva in which the Bromley-Davenports for two generations have sheltered their all-blissful guests. I remember the fascination of the book, but I have forgotten its language. If, therefore, I plagiarise at all in what I am about to write, it will be an unconscious plagiarism. Under the protection of this apology in advance, coupled with a further apology for treading at all on ground which has been already so artistically exploited, I will now try to put my own impressions into words.

When, in continuation of our sea-journey to Veblungsness, the carioles finally set us down at Fiva, I saw before me a white wooden house standing more or less in the middle of a small circular plain, only admitted into existence by the outward curvature, at that particular spot, of the two great walls of rock that eternally fence in the valley. The little circular plain is in some parts open grassland, and in other parts is decorously, but not densely, wooded with birch and pine trees; the prevailing colour of the ground scheme a vivid green; the hedging-in cliffs a uniform grey, and the limited sky-space, cut abruptly to right and left by the grey edge of the cliffs, a flawless and uninterrupted blue. A peaceful but persistent drone beats upon the ears from all sides. It comes from the multitudes of little waterfalls, which the melting snow sends continuously down from above. The drone or murmur or roar (it is a big drone or murmur but a little roar) is never absent from one's ears and is as essential a feature of the valley's character, and as eternal, as are the cliffs themselves. Its soothing effect is occasionally disturbed by a succession of thunderous detonations, as some detached rock comes plunging down the face of the cliff, and shivers to fragments on the slope of shingle at the bottom.

These cliffs are so majestic in their grandeur, and speak with so many voices—sometimes soft and purring and at others loud and angry—that one can well understand that the superstitious natives, in old heathen days, worshipped them as gods. I think that, if one lived in that valley, year in year out, one would do the same. They are so stupendous in their height and so gnomish and fantastic in their formation. Very little imagination is required to fashion malevolent figures out of the upright needles or pinnacles that stand like sleepless sentries on the edge of the cliff, watching the comings and goings of the little mortals down below and occasionally hurling down upon them a thunderous rock in token of displeasure. The highest of these Trolltindene or Witch Peaks is said to rear its head 5,800 feet above the sea and very little less above the spot where Fiva stands. It was weeks before I was able to realise the immense height of these Trolltindene, and then only by the aid of clouds. For many days after our arrival the weather was so perfect that not one cloud was to be seen disfiguring the pale cobalt roof to our valley. Then one day there were clouds—white fleecy clouds dotted about here and there—and I saw, though I could hardly believe my eyes, that one of these white fleecy clouds that had strayed into our valley hung but half way up the Trolltindene.

A little later I had another surprising proof of the impossibility of properly appraising the height of these cliffs with the unaided eye. Below the highest of the Witch Peaks there is a shingle slope formed by the falling débris of ages. It is a confidential looking slope and one day, being fond of climbing, I set out to scale it. I worked hard for two hours and then abandoned the attempt. The going was not good, of course, but, even so, had the height of the slope been anything within reasonable distance of what it appeared to be, it should have been but a pleasant morning scramble. When, later on, I saw the clouds resting well below the summit of this slope, I began to get some sort of sense of proportion with regard to the rock formations of the Romsdaal valley.

One day Willie Davenport and I, accompanied by a guide, made the ascent of the Trolltindene. We drove about five miles down the valley to where a shoulder of the ridge sloped down to the level of the river, and up this we gradually made our ascent till, in the end, we reached the summit of the ridge above Fiva. As a mountaineering feat it was, of course, nothing to talk about, but as an experience it was never to be forgotten. The Trolltindene can probably claim to be the most remarkable rock formation of this kind in the world. We found ourselves on a rocky ridge over 5,000 feet high and not more than twelve feet or so across. On our right hand the ridge was supported, to within twenty feet of its summit, by a glacier which sloped smoothly away into invisible distance; on our left was the sheer face of a precipice measuring about a mile in height. One by one we lay on our faces and peered over the edge, with the other two holding on to our heels. It was a wonderful sight. The house of Fiva, almost directly below where we lay, looked like a mere speck of white in a smooth green plain. The bed of the winding river looked like a huge yellow snake coiling round the little white speck that stood for the house. Of the ten feet or so of water in the river there was no sign. We could see nothing but alternate sand and rock. We threw stones down, but no sound of their arrival at the bottom reached our ears. We were vulgar enough to spit down. It was almost irresistible to do so.

Some years later I was travelling in America and was watching with wondering admiration, the amazing accuracy, at very long range, of an expectorating fellow-traveller.

“That must take a lot of practice,” I remarked after a time. “What, that?” he exclaimed contemptuously. “ Now I’ll just ask you to place that spittoon right between the gentleman’s feet on the far side of the car, and I’ll bet you a dollar I don’t so much as splash one of his boots.”

He glared at me truculently.

Feeling a little uncertain as to how far the gentleman on the far side of the car would enter into the spirit of the wager, I declined the bet and—with some idea of creating a diversion—I said : “ It may interest you to know that I once spat a mile.”

Now if anyone made such a statement in an English railway carriage, he would be greeted with shouts of derisive laughter, or with such chilling comments as “ Go on with you,” “ Not ’arf,” “ ’Oo are you getting at ? ” etc. My American, however, without a trace of astonishment, merely remarked : “ Was that so ? Well, I reckon that was some spit. And where would that be now ? ”

So I told him of the Trolltindene formation. He was interested but not impressed.

“ Did you ever see the grand Colorado Cañon ? ” he asked me.

I confessed that I had not.

“ Well,” he said, “ I reckon you could drop that bit of Norway where you did that spitting of yours into the Grand Cañon and never know it was there.” He glared at me defiantly as he spoke and made his fifteenth consecutive bull’s-eye. I did not feel called upon to argue the point.

The top ridge of the Trolltindene, on which we lay peering down into the tremendous depths below, is in an obviously crumbling condition, being literally cob-webbed with cracks and fissures. In some places, great masses of rock appear to be held in position only by a miracle. Willie Davenport and the guide and I lay on our backs and, placing our feet against some of these semi-detached masses, completed the work begun by frost many ages ago and sent them on their downward journey. It was a most exhilarating sight to see these huge masses of rock bounding down the glacier quite noiselessly and with gigantic leaps like some colossal tennis-ball. The guide assured us that there was no human habitation and no live stock within very many miles of that glacier, so that we assisted Nature in its demolition of the Trolltindene with easy consciences.

However, I am talking too much of rocks and too little of the real objective of our journey—the broad swift-flowing Rauma with its pale-green, ice-cold, salmon-stocked waters. The Rauma was the real shrine at which we worshipped. All other occupations were subsidiary and subservient to that of enticing its inhabitants on to the river bank. We were out and in harness at seven and fished till nine, when the sun reached the water. Then we breakfasted—invariably on some fish caught that same morning, for why should we eat yesterday's salmon when we had others straight out of the water to take their place? Then, till four in the afternoon when the sun is once more off the river, we "lazed" away the day, seldom taking any violent exercise, for it was as hot as Mesopotamia in that cliff-enclosed valley when the sun was on it, and as for exercise, well we got plenty of that while we were fishing. What did we catch? Oh, well, quite enough to make life very exciting, for Rauma salmon are not to be hauled straight out of the water as soon as hooked; no, pardie! they are not. Every fish we hooked had been in the sea the night before. Every fish with which we battled was as firm and rounded as a porpoise, as strong as a young sea-lion and as silvery as the window of Messrs. Elkington's shop in Regent Street.

Losses of course we had—tragic, soul-searing losses hardly to be borne for the next few hours after the event, for, as is well known to all who fling the expectant salmon-fly, the fish which are lost are invariably much bigger than those which are landed.

One particularly tragic loss I had, the details of which I will set forth in hopes of the sympathy of those who may have suffered as I did.

A cloudless morning, with the cobalt roof of our valley assuming a more heavenly shade even than usual; the grass grey with the night's dew; blackbirds singing ecstatically on all sides and such a *joie de vivre* in the air that it is with the greatest difficulty that—in deference to my gillie's feelings—I refrain from joining the blackbirds and carolling ecstatically. On the far side of the valley the invisible sun has already gilded the upper half of the Romsdaal Horn. Ah! I had forgotten to mention the Romsdaal Horn, for which my sincere apologies to that excellent understudy of the Matterhorn. From the very brink of the river opposite the house of Fiva the sugar loaf point of the Romsdaal Horn rises 5,000 feet into the sky. It looks much higher than the Trolltindene, which face it half a mile away, but in reality it is 800 feet lower. These two, the Romsdaal Horn and the Trolltindene form the curved walls of the valley that holds Fiva and the river Rauma in its enchanted grip.

To come back then to the point where I broke off, the sun has already gilded the upper half of the Romsdaal Horn. The straight line across its face, which divides the shadow from the sunshine and which is ever creeping lower and lower, is going to be my clock. There is no need for me to consult a watch. When the line reaches the water it is time for me to reel up and go home to breakfast. However, that is not yet. I walk with joyous strides and wild expectant hope in my heart to the river bank, cross the rushing waters in a flat-bottomed boat and then make my way up to Aarnehoe, the best and highest pool in the river. Here I embark in another boat and fling my line across the clear swirling stream. Aarnehoe is not a pool where one's fate is long in doubt. If the fish mean taking, one of them will have the fly before it has made the circuit of the pool three times. This morning they evidently do mean taking. My third cast has barely touched the water before there is a glad upheaval of the water's surface, an immediate tightening of my line, and the next moment the reel is singing its heart-stirring song in a gradually crescendo key.

It may be here mentioned for the enlightenment of those of the public to whom the Romsdaal valley is untrodden ground that, in this particular pool, everything depends on whether one can prevent the fish from going down. Below there are two hundred yards of tumultuous rapids, separating Aarnehoe from Langhole, which is the next pool below. If the fish once gets into the head of this rapid nothing short of a steel hawser can stop him from going down. He could not stop himself even if he wished to; and, if he does go down, he goes down at a lightning speed that quickly places an immense distance between him and the bewildered holder of the rod. I had a huge reel on my rod that held 200 yards of line, but I was four times run out and broken by fish dropping down that rapid from Aarnehoe.

It can be readily understood then that, having hooked my fish and being fully alive to the hideous perils below, I now strain every nerve to keep him in the pool which he has made his temporary home. There are two ways of doing this, either by sheer brute strength of rod and tackle, or else by cunning. The cunning method—according to the libellous superstitions of fishermen—only succeeds if the fish is a female fish. Then, if you try to pull it down stream, it always goes up; and *vice versa*. First of all then I try brute strength with my fish, and finding that fail—for I must either give line or else be broken—I then, as a forlorn hope, try the other method. I pull the fish violently towards the dreaded rapid. Alas! it is evidently not a female fish, for it responds instantly to my suggestion and, next moment, it is in the head of the rapid and the only chance of maintaining the connection between fisherman and fish lies in agile pursuit. Now is the moment—if ever—for every available fraction of energy, activity and brain-coolness that I can bring to bear on the situation.

"Row, Andreas, like blazes for shore." Before the boat touches land, I leap out into knee-deep water and, clambering ashore, embark on the hot pursuit of my madly-careering salmon. By this time I have out an appalling extent of line. The fish jumps from the water and looks like a herring in the distance. It seems beyond all power of belief that I can be materially connected with that minute, distant, leaping object which I know, from a number of unmistakable indications, to be a very large salmon. However, it is quite clear that, if I ruminate instead of acting, there will very soon be an end of that connection which I so earnestly desire to maintain. The slightest stumble on my part, involving any jerk or check on that tremendous weight of line, and good-bye to this particular *salmo salar* for ever. So, holding the rod high above my head, to keep the line clear of intervening rocks, I follow my fish down the rough stony bank, running as hard as legs and wind will let me, tripping over boulders, barking my shins and muttering all sorts of strange old-English words not usually found in my vocabulary. However, many of these, as it turns out, were uncalled for, for on this occasion I reach the comparatively calm waters of Langhole in uninterrupted communication with my fish. All should now be well, for I am able to recover a large proportion of my lost line and so reduce the chances of a break. Andreas, slow-footed and short of wind, comes panting after me and gets ready the Langhole boat, and once more we embark. The Langhole stream, although very far removed from a rapid, runs fairly swift, and Andreas gets the boat out into mid-stream and starts pulling fairly hard up-stream in order to keep the boat motionless. In the meantime, my evil-minded fish takes it into his perverse head to go careering downstream again, and by the time that Andreas has got the boat nose-on to the stream and under the control of his oars, I have again lost almost all the line that I had so laboriously reeled up before embarking. I turn my back to Andreas and my face to my invisible but most muscular fish, and make an abortive attempt to check his downward career. It is absolutely unavailing. Any fisherman will understand that, with that immense length of line out (quite 150 yards) and a single-gut cast, it would be impossible to put any very severe check on the fish. The only thing was to follow him down in the boat, and so recover some of my line. The force of the stream would do that for me without any assistance from the boatman.

"Don't row," I shout to Andreas over my shoulder.

"Oh yes, oh yes," Andreas replies cheerfully, pulling harder than ever.

" Don't row," I yell, seeing the last yards of my line rapidly whizzing off my reel.

" Oh yes, oh yes," says Andreas, straining at the oars with every muscle in his body.

" DON'T——" but it is all too late.

The point of my rod bends till it nearly touches the water and then springs back with the sickening limpness that has filled so many aspiring hearts with gloom. In silence I reel up my long, limp, lifeless, uninteresting line; in silence I note where the gut has parted; in silence I step ashore from the boat and make my way up to the house, casting, in passing, a bilious eye on the three beautiful fish which Willie Davenport has brought home from the lower waters, and which are now lying in silvery splendour on the grass before the front door. In silence I toy with my breakfast. My host sees that, for some unknown reason, I am deeply moved and, being of a sympathetic nature, refrains from questioning me, and so the meal passes.

It was about midday when the power of speech seemed to have come back to me.

" Why," I asked in a faint thin voice, " why did Andreas, whom to the best of my knowledge I have never injured in my life, deliberately lose me the biggest salmon that I ever had on, or am ever likely to have on ? "

I recounted my painful experience of the morning as well as my emotion would let me. " Oh," said my host when I had concluded, " the explanation is quite simple. Norwegians have no understanding of the English word ' don't.' ' Row ' they understand perfectly; so every time you shouted ' Don't row ' the only word that Andreas understood was ' row,' and of course he thought you were encouraging him to greater efforts."

So that was it. The explanation cleansed my brain of the various murderous impulses that had been so busy within it since my visit to the river. I no longer weighed in my mind the respective merits of sundry forms of sudden death, each and all of which—before breakfast—had seemed too mild for the deserts of Andreas. But my depression of mind was in no way lessened. The vision of that silvery monster that I had practically defeated and made my own, and then lost through such a piece of absolutely idiotic—— Oh, well, it did not bear thinking of. "Cheer up," said my host, "you will probably get just as big a one to-morrow."

"Just as big a one!" I echoed derisively. "Ha! ha! ha! Very likely indeed! Why that was the biggest fish in the river; the biggest fish that ever has been in the river; the biggest fish that ever will be in the river."

He smiled upon me politely, but with a touch of pity.

"Yes, I know," he said, "I have lost that fish myself before now."

All things, good and bad, come to an end sometime—a fact from which, on balance, we probably benefit in the long run; but the end of our six weeks at Fiva came far, far too soon, and it will need the passing away of many dreary winters and many gnawing toothaches to balance the regret with which I turned my back at last on the beautiful Romsdaal valley with its eternal music of murmuring waters, and its unbounded possibilities in the way of piscatorial adventure.

CHAPTER XI

SNOWDON, ETC.

Memories of the Trolltindene and of many pleasant and exciting experiences both on their summit and at their base conjure up visions of other little mountains that I have from time to time attacked and defeated or been defeated by. A mountaineer, even in the most limited sense, I have never been, nor does the painful procession of five or six roped men over fields of ice and snow appeal to me in the smallest degree. At the same time, in the merry days when limbs were supple and wind was sound, I never could see a rocky, snowless pinnacle rising from the surface of the earth without an overmastering desire to set my foot upon the top. This craving, if I may so call it, was at times almost an obsession. I remember on one occasion when, in company with a sister and two sisters-in-law, I was making a tour of county Donegal in a tandem pony-cart, I was so determined to get to the top of Errigal—a miniature Matterhorn and the highest mountain in that part of Ireland—that I rose at cock-crow, walked four miles from the Gweedore Hotel to the foot of Errigal, scaled it in perspiring haste and arrived back at the hotel, exhausted but happy, just in time to climb on to the box of the pony-cart and drive the tandem on to Dungloe, which was our next resting place. Looked back upon, across a gaping interval, the act seems an extraordinarily silly one, but, at the time, I am quite sure that it seemed to me very much the reverse. For many years I had looked on Errigal from the top of Bessie Bell, our tame mountain at Barons Court. Although fifty miles away, it stands up gallantly from the horizon on a clear day, and it seemed to me—now that I was within four miles of it—that the prestige of the highest and most conspicuous mountain in north-west Ireland demanded that I should build a small tributary cairn upon its highest pinnacle.

With such an irrepressible "excelsior" spirit governing my outlook on the irregularities of the earth's surface, it is not surprising that, some two or three years later, while quartered at Rupert Lane Barracks in Liverpool, I responded with alacrity to an invitation to join a small party of friends in the ascent of Snowdon.

My brother Claud was, at the time, member for Liverpool, and as a consequence, I was the recipient of a great deal of kindness and hospitality during the time that I was quartered in the town. All the amenities which the place offered were generously laid open to me. The mysterious Caledonian game of golf at that date meant nothing to me at all, nor, for that matter, did it mean much to anyone south of the Tweed. There were, in those days, I believe, only four golf courses in England—Hoylake, Blackheath, Sandwich and Westward Ho; but in this I may be wrong. In any case there were very, very few courses in England and the game had not taken any hold. The Hoylake golf links, therefore, did not entice me at all, but cricket and racquets I played to my heart's content. I was also initiated—at some little cost to myself—into the mysteries of the gentle game of quoits. About once a fortnight during the summer months we would dine at the Quoit Club, where we refreshed ourselves with "toad-in-the-hole" and suitable beverages and, thus fortified, repaired to the charming garden in rear where we spent the rest of the evening in throwing iron discs at little wooden pegs driven into the ground. To the tyro the game looks easy—especially after dinner—but an hour or two's play soon brings it home to him—somewhat painfully—that it is not as easy as it looks. Wagers ran rather high at the Quoit Club and it was usually with a considerably lightened pocket that I made my thoughtful way home. Still, it was great fun and quite worth the outlay.

The Mersey Yacht Club is of course a famous institution of long standing and wide reputation and, needless to say, its doors, in common with others, were flung hospitably wide to me. Many a delightful sail did I enjoy in various units of its fleet in the open water beyond the mouth of the Mersey. One day a member, whom I will, for protective purposes, call Smith, asked me if I would like to form one of the crew to man his cutter in a forthcoming regatta. Having the very haziest idea of what I was in for, but thinking the experience would be new and interesting, I replied, without hesitation, that I would.

The race, it appeared, was to be run from Liverpool to Llandudno and was in the nature of a handicap—the smaller boats being given a compensating start. My friend's boat was one of the smaller ones and the rules only allowed him a crew of three, among whom it was to be my proud honour to be numbered. Smith asked me if I could steer and I replied with confidence that I could. Of course I could. Anyone who was not an idiot could steer. This last I thought, but did not say—luckily, in view of after events. I had been brought up from my earliest youth among a small fleet of lake-boats, the steering of which called for no higher brain work than lay in the occasional pulling of a rope with the right hand or with the left. It was almost an insult to ask a grown man if he could steer. Steer, indeed, I should think so!

We started at our scheduled hour in a gentle easterly breeze before which our little cutter sailed languidly but progressively towards the sea. My view that steering was work for mere women and children seemed to be confirmed, for what had I to do but sit still and, with an occasional touch of the tiller, keep the boat's nose in mid-channel? The other two members of the crew ran about and pulled sails up and down and hauled upon ropes, but I sat still in dignified aloofness from all these menial operations.

It was a delightful day, sunny and fresh and bright, and nothing could have been more enjoyable or more uneventful than our placid progress down the cocoa-coloured Mersey. I was glad I had come. Yacht racing, I thought, if a little unexciting, was at all events restful and pleasant. At length we came within sight of the open sea. At the mouth of the Mersey stood a large phlegmatic buoy, the circuit of which all competitors had to make before heading for the open sea and Llandudno. Incidentally it may be added that an umpire's boat lay in close attendance, to prevent any cutting of corners or other unconstitutional dodges.

Now, having ridden a certain number of steeplechases, etc., and being therefore fully alive to the desirability of gaining a yard or two at a corner, if possible, the prevailing idea in my mind at sight of a post—as I disparagingly named the buoy—was to shave it as close as possible. In a steeplechase it is in no way detrimental to scrape your leg against a flag. How was I to know that in a yacht race they had other silly rules? I determined that we should whizz round that buoy as it had never been whizzed round before. I pictured Smith patting me delightedly on the back as we registered a gain of three lengths on our rivals.

There is, however, as I was shortly to learn to my sorrow, one very pointed difference between a horse race and a yacht race, and that is that in the former there are no tides. In the latter there unquestionably are and they upset nice measurements. As we approached the buoy, the owner of our cutter suddenly became aware that our course was not such as he himself would have steered.

"Take care," he shouted, "or you'll foul the buoy."

In instant obedience to this command—for was he not our skipper?—I abandoned all idea of a spectacular waltz round the buoy and put over the helm so as to give it a wider berth, but a strong and malignant tide had other views for us and the boat did not respond. The buoy seemed to have a magnetic attraction for us which was stronger than the rudder. Closer and closer did it loom up upon our starboard bow—or was it the port bow?—anyhow, I mean the left side of the boat. Suddenly, as though scenting imminent peril, Smith leapt to his feet in wild excitement.

"Luff," he yelled at me, "for God's sake luff."

This was all very well, but to me it was so much Greek.

"How the devil do you luff?" I yelled back, but it was too late. The side of our boat banged heavily against the buoy, the umpire's cold grey eye was upon us and we were disqualified.

I wish to place it on record that Smith displayed great forbearance. What he may have muttered to himself I cannot say, but I can swear that not even a fragment of the Commination Service reached my ears. Silently and sadly we turned the boat's nose in the direction of Llandudno and prepared for our long (and now, alas! profitless) sail to the Welsh coast. The wind, however, had by now completely dropped; the tide, not content with having elbowed us into the buoy, was now showing a disposition to push us miles out of our course, and Llandudno and dinner (or even breakfast) seemed very far away. For an hour or two more we drifted about disconsolately. Smith, who knew the Mersey and its moods, predicted that we were in for a night of it, and we were, in fact, already making arrangements to keep alternate watches while the other two slept in the cutter's little cockpit, when, by the mercy of Neptune, Sir Andrew Walker's magnificent steam yacht hove in sight bearing directly down upon us, and we at once sent out the S.O.S. The yacht responded nobly and Sir Andrew, on learning of our plight, most kindly offered to tow us into Beaumaris, for which place he was bound. We did not refuse.

It is curious how perverse a thing is human nature. That night, as we sat comfortably at dinner in the hotel at Beaumaris, with everything that tends to make man of a joyful countenance within reach of an extended arm, I tried to attract a little credit to myself for our present happy state, which I contrasted favourably with the miserable plight of those infatuated yachtsmen who were still battling with wind and tide on the inhospitable bosom of the Irish Sea. Smith, however, was not so responsive as I could have wished and, in fact, instead of thanking me for having saved him from a cold, sleepless night, entered into an elaborate definition of the verb to "luff," with hints as to its application in emergency. I treasured up his words for future use, but, in view of my comfortable surroundings and the long-necked bottle at my right hand, felt pleasantly unrepentant. As a matter of fact we afterwards learned that all the rest of the competitors—including the winner of the race—were out all night and did not make Llandudno till the midday following. By that time, having the duties of a soldier to perform at Rupert Lane Barracks, I had returned by train to Liverpool. The other two sailed the cutter home. I fancy they were not sorry to be without the services of their late steersman.

All this, however, seems to have very little to do with Snowdon or with the art of mountain climbing, which was the subject which first brought me from the heights of Errigal and the Trolltindene down to the somewhat squalid environs of Rupert Lane Barracks, so let me direct my wandering thoughts once more to the mountain peaks. My introduction to Snowdon came about in the following way. While I was quartered at Rupert Lane, two stalwart Liverpudlians named Pilkington and Porter, both good friends of mine, resolved on a walking tour through Wales, the culminating object of which was to be the ascent of Snowdon, and they asked me to make a third to the party. Nothing, of course, could have been more to my liking than an expedition which promised a mountain climb, and, on the appointed day, off we set. At first all went well and, although the month was February, we enjoyed quite decent weather till we began to approach Beddgelert. Then it started to snow most dismally and most persistently and, by the time we reached the hotel, the conditions were about as bad as they could be. However, we hoped for the best and went to bed, full of determination not to be baulked of our intended climb by a wretched sprinkling of snow.

Next morning there was a slight improvement in the weather, but it was still snowing fitfully and the sky was very overcast. We noticed with some concern that the upper half of the mountain was completely buried in heavy yellow-grey clouds. We ate our breakfast in sanguine hopes that the sky might clear, but it did not, nor did it give any indication of clearing. The glass was depressingly low, and conditions generally about as bad as they could be. The landlord, who knew Snowdon as he knew the sight of his own bearded face in the glass, did his utmost to dissuade us from making our attempt, assuring us that the ascent in such weather was highly dangerous and in fact very seldom ventured upon even by expert mountaineers, but we were not to be dissuaded. We had come there to climb Snowdon. We had trudged many miles of the picturesque but stony roads of Wales in order to reach the foot of the mountain and Snowdon we meant to climb or per—— well, no, not quite that, but anyhow we meant to have a good try and, if we failed, well then we would fail.

Snowdon, it may be mentioned in passing, is a mountain which has to its credit—or discredit—a long list of victims. The northern slope is one up which, in summer, a nursery maid could wheel a perambulator with comparative comfort to herself, if not to the baby. To the south, however, it turns a very different and far less smiling face. Here the contour of the mountain is eviscerated by a very fine crater, some 1500 feet in depth and with perpendicular sides. The easiest way to the summit from Beddgelert is clearly indicated by a narrow zigzag path which, in the upper reaches, known as Llechog, approaches rather unpleasantly near to the edge of the crater when Snowdon is under snow. I don't mean that it approaches nearer when the mountain is under snow, but that the unpleasantness of the crater's neighbourhood is appreciably increased by the snow. This part of the mountain has to be negotiated with care and with all the protective equipment of the mountaineer. Whether we were told all this before we started or on our return I cannot say. My own impression is that we were not told it till after we got back, otherwise that which happened hardly could have happened. We took a professional guide. This we were most strongly advised to do, and most certainly we also knew that he carried all the regular mountain-climber's paraphernalia of ropes and an ice-axe, but I think we looked upon all this as being in the nature of professional display rather than for actual use. I can answer for it that we attached much more importance to four soda-water bottles with which we loaded our guide up—three of them full of soda-water and the fourth filled to the cork with whisky—than to all the climbing gear with which he thought fit to burden his broad shoulders.

Off then we went in the best of fettle and we were soon spurting up the zigzag track with the long elastic strides of inexperience, for the trained mountaineer always climbs with a slow, dogged, very self-contained step, which experience has taught him is the easiest road to the summit. As a consequence of this exuberant pace of ours, the guide, being a professional mountaineer, and being in addition weighted with a rope, and four bottles, at once began to drop behind and was very soon out of sight. Up and up we sped, I, as the youngest of the party, in front and making the pace. I had from the first rather ridiculed the idea of a guide, and now, as I bounded up the track, the precaution seemed to me more ridiculous than ever, for the track was most clearly defined and seemed to present no sort of difficulty. However, it was snowing hard and very cold, and visibility, as the books call it, was limited to a very short distance ahead. The higher we went the thicker fell the snow and the worse the visibility became. It began to blow a gale too, which we had not bargained for, for down at the hotel there had been no wind.

At length, after a long climb, I came to a place where the track, for the first time, was covered for about thirty yards by a drift of snow, or by what appeared to be a drift of snow, filling up a V-shaped dip in the track. How far we were from the summit I had no means of judging, as it was impossible by now to see more than a few yards ahead, but I was just able to see where the track emerged again from the snow drift on the far side and, as this seemed to me a sufficient guide for my direction, I pushed ahead across the snow without giving the matter a second thought. The pace at which I was going (I was almost running in my eagerness to be first at the top) carried me some way across the snow-drift before I discovered that my feet were not " biting " and could get no hold on the surface of the steep smooth slope on which I found myself. I began sliding down. I fell on my hands and knees and tried to dig my fingers into the snow, but I might as well have tried to dig them into a pavement, and I still kept sliding down. I luckily had with me a new holly stick—hardly more than a cane—but strong and with a very sharp ferrule. I jabbed this stick with all my strength into the snow and it went in up to the head and gave me a splendid hold. I gripped it in a grateful fist and looked about me to get my bearings. The first thing that I noticed was that the ten or twelve feet that I had slid down had perceptibly widened the distance between me and *terra firma*; for the drift spread out like a fan as it went down and, whereas it had been comparatively narrow at the pathway, it was half as wide again where I lay. I noticed also with a certain feeling of disquietude that the slope on which I was lying came to an abrupt end about thirty feet below me, and I was painfully aware that, where it ended, the precipitous sides of the crater began, and that there was nothing between me and the lake, 1500 feet below, but those thirty feet of frozen, unretentive, inhospitable snow or ice, as it was, in point of fact, on the surface. On the mainland, to my right, not more than fifteen feet away, stood Pilkington and Porter in anxious meditation. We exchanged ideas and we all agreed that there was nothing to be done but to wait till the guide arrived with the ice-axe. I ate my packet of sandwiches, which I carried in my breast pocket. Pilkington and Porter ate theirs, but still no sign was to be seen of our dilatory guide. We had, as it afterwards appeared, made the ascent at about three times the regulation pace. In view of the fact that the guide was apparently hopelessly behind, and not likely to arrive on the scene before we were all reduced to icicles, the suggestion was made by one of the other two—I forget which—that I should carefully draw my stick out of the snow, jab it in again a foot or two nearer land, and so gradually work my way to safety. The idea seemed to me quite a good one, and I at once proceeded to put it in practice. With the greatest care imaginable I unsheathed my stick but, as I raised my arm to jab it in again, I started sliding down. The warmth of my body had turned the surface into polished ice, and it afforded no more grip to my body than the greased runners in a shipyard do to a newly-launched vessel. In wild desperation I jabbed downwards with my stick, and it went in and held, but at a most precarious angle, for so fast was I sliding when I struck that only half the length of the stick penetrated the snow and the other half stuck out at such an angle that it seemed likely to slip out at any moment. At the full stretch of my right arm above my head I lay and gripped this most inadequate support. A most uncomfortable position, I assure you, and one that was not made more comfortable by the knowledge that my last slide had perceptibly diminished the distance between me and the edge of the crater and had at the same time appreciably widened the nasty stretch of polished snow that lay between me and dry land. The little stick on which so much depended looked (and felt) as if it not only might, but *must*, come out at any moment. Porter—hideously concerned, as he afterwards admitted—ran back to try and hurry up the dilatory guide and his much-to-be-desired ice-axe, while Pilkington stood on the edge of the dry land and tried, with only partial success, to wear an everyday face. As for me, I lay as motionless as a log, scarcely daring to breathe and trying to think of fires, nice warm beds and hot whisky and water. After an interval which cannot be gauged by the ordinary methods of reckoning, Porter and the guide arrived on the scene and the latter, breathless as he was, lost no time in getting to work with his ice-axe, with which he hacked a series of scientific steps in line with my feet. Nearer and nearer he drew, and finally, fixing his own feet firmly in the steps he had cut, he dug the point of the ice-axe into the snow above and proffered me a helping hand. Without the aid of this hand I am quite sure that I could not have moved, for I was frozen as stiff as an icicle; but, with the support of the ice-axe and the guide's friendly hand, it was a matter of comparative simplicity.

My first act on reaching dry land was to seize the soda-water bottle which contained our whisky supply, and my next was to drain it to the very base in a series of spasmodic gulps—an operation which the rest of the party watched with faces compared to which Miserimus Doleful's countenance on the discovery of Xerxes's broken wind must have been one broad grin. The extraordinary thing was that a draught of raw spirit, which under ordinary conditions would have skinned my throat, now went down as though it had been so much milk, and in fact was gone almost before I knew that I had started drinking.

It was perhaps the sad sight of the empty whisky bottle, as much as anything else, which decided the party to make an immediate return to the hotel; but in honest truth it would have been sheer madness to have gone on. It was blowing an icy gale and snowing so hard that one could not see twenty yards in any direction. The track downwards was still distinguishable and there was a unanimous vote in favour of making prompt use of it. Slowly and thoughtfully we commenced the descent.

There can be no question but that I had a most providential escape, and the providential part of it lay in the peculiar type of stick which I carried. In those days I carried a stick, not for support, but as an occupation for the hand, and I had bought this little stick a day or two before our start from Liverpool, because it was heavy for its size and had a nice balance in the hand. I noticed at the time I bought it that it had a very unusually pointed ferrule, but I attached no importance to this. I am, however, firmly convinced that, had I carried an ordinary hazel or ash walking stick with its broad, blunt ferrule, the stick would not have penetrated when I made that last desperate jab at the snow as I was sliding down and I should have gone over the edge to destruction. Just luck, I suppose. Well, one doesn't know.

There were two curious features connected with my adventure, one physical and the other psychological. The physical curiosity was this. When I started that morning from Beddgelert, I had on me so bad a sore throat that I could barely speak. The throat was of some days' standing. I lay for a period, which may have been twenty minutes or may have been half an hour, on frozen snow at an altitude of over 3000 feet, with a gale whistling through me and snow falling heavily the whole time, and when I got back to the hotel my sore throat was completely cured. I can offer no explanation, but relate the experience for the benefit of others suffering from sore throats. They will now know how to get rid of them.

The psychological part of the experience which interested me (if indeed psychological be the right term) was that, during the time that I was hanging on the edge of a very long drop, I was not conscious of the slightest feeling of fear. That fear, however, was subconsciously present in my mind seems to me beyond question, for, during the descent of the track, my knees would scarcely support me. This may have been due in part to my frozen state and again—as some might uncharitably suggest—it may have been due to the fact that I had swallowed at a draught all the whisky intended for four people; but I think it was mainly nervous reaction.

Nerves are strange things and their behaviour at times seems to have no relation to circumstances. When I batted for Harrow at Lord's, I know that I was not in the smallest degree nervous. When batting in village cricket-matches, I have often been undeniably nervous. With regard to the sensation of fear when in tight places, I remember reading in one of Mr. Whymper's accounts of his Alpine Climbs how, on one occasion, the connecting rope broke at a critical moment and he was precipitated head over heels down a steep snow slope which ended in rocks and precipices and in almost certain death. He was quite conscious all the time and had no feeling of fear—only of interested curiosity as to what would happen next. By a piece of almost miraculous good fortune he was brought up short by a deep drift of newly-blown snow, in practically the only spot on the escarpment where he could have arrived without meeting death. If he had met death by hitting a rock or shooting over a precipice, he would have been conscious of no unpleasant sensation.

I was once sitting on the box-seat of our regimental coach as we drove from Hounslow to Hampton Court on our way to Sandown Races. Pat Close, our official whip, was driving. He was a fine, dashing driver and, in accordance with regimental tradition, he turned into the gate of Bushey Park without any diminution of speed. This was—according to our lights—a perfectly proper and hussar-like act, and we should probably have deposed Close from his position as official driver had he ventured to approach the gate in a more restrained fashion; but on this occasion the operation was not attended with success.

The iron gates of Bushey Park, which open inwards, had recently been painted and on one of them hung a large placard bearing the words "Wet Paint." At this placard all four horses, as we swept through the gate, shied with one accord and with great energy, with the result that the cross-bar in front of the coach came slap up against the massive gate-post and the coach stopped dead. With the shock, the leaders' traces and reins broke like so much wool and the horses went galloping about Bushey Park at their own sweet wills. I, from my distinguished position on the box-seat, was neatly shot over the near wheeler's head on to my own, which came into determined contact with the road. I was told that I remained unconscious for some minutes. When I came to, I remembered nothing whatever of my fall or of any sudden contact with the road. I distinctly remembered seeing the placard and seeing the horses shy, but after that I remembered nothing. The interest lies in the thought that, if I had struck the road a little harder and had not come round, I should have taken the long journey without knowing anything about it and without experiencing even an instant's unpleasantness. I have never fallen over a precipice, but I have not the slightest doubt that the same comforting thought may be cherished by all climbers with regard to any such possible eventuality in the future. A certain experience many years ago brought this vividly home to me. I was witness of a very terrible fire near the Mansion House Station, in which a number of girls lost their lives. The Fire Brigade, having a station close at hand, were very quickly on the spot and pumped water into the building with such energy that the flames were soon got under, but smoke in ominous clouds continued to pour forth from the windows. A fireman climbed a ladder up to a window on the third floor, entered the building and brought out the unconscious figure of a girl, whom he carried, hanging limply over his shoulder, down the ladder into safety. It was a fine act and the crowd cheered themselves hoarse. A number of other girls jumped from a neighbouring window on the same floor into a fire-sheet which the members of the Fire Brigade held below. As a matter of fact, they did not jump but rolled off the window ledge. They all landed more or less safely, but a young man who jumped in an upright position landed on his feet in the middle of the sheet, bounded off on to the pavement and was instantly killed. I never realised till that day the amazing pace at which a human body falls through the air. Illustrations always represent falling persons as though poised in mid-air with arms and legs outspread. As a matter of fact they fall so quickly that the eye can barely follow them.

Up to that moment the Fire Brigade had behaved splendidly, but afterwards to my mind their behaviour was very much the reverse. The people in the upper floors of the house opposite the fire could see that there were still a number of girls imprisoned in the top, or fourth, floor, and shouted this information to the members of the Fire Brigade below. They took no notice. Even I, from where I stood on the pavement below those houses, could see arms feebly waving behind the closed windows of the top floor. I tried to break the police cordon and tell the officer in charge; but I was thrust back and told to mind my own business.

In the meantime the members of the Fire Brigade, or possibly of the Salvage Corps, for both were present, were busy carrying pictures and other valuables out of the house. All pumping had ceased; but, although there were no flames visible, a dense smoke was pouring out of the third floor windows which anyone could see would shortly turn to flames. We all redoubled our shouts to the Police and the Fire Brigade. "There are girls up there," the people in the windows shouted, and pointed with outstretched arms to the top floor. It is hardly to be believed that those shouts could not be heard, but not the slightest notice was taken. A number of the members of the Fire Brigade stood in the street, within the police cordon, chatting to one another, while others carried out furniture, but of any further attempt to stamp out the smouldering fire I saw no sign. In the end, as we had all foreseen, the fire on the third floor broke out again with a tremendous roar and the floor above was of course instantly enveloped in a furnace.

At the inquest on the dead girls I gave evidence, and stated the facts as above; but my strictures were, I think, held to be little short of blasphemy. The Fire Brigade can do no wrong.

Later on I saw some of the girls who had jumped, at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and questioned them as to their experiences. They all said the same thing. They remembered crawling out on to the window ledge, but after that nothing. They remembered neither jumping, nor falling, nor landing in the sheet, which goes to show—well, what does it go to show? It is rather difficult to say. In any case it seems rather to knock out the famous complaint of the Irishman who fell off a ladder, that " it was not the fall that hurt him at all at all, but the sudden shtop at the bottom." From all available evidence it would seem that the " sudden shtop at the bottom " does not hurt at all, provided the drop be long enough.

To revert to that curious part of the human organism known as " nerve " in distinction to " nerves," and the unaccountability of its occasional moods, I am strongly reminded of an experience which I once underwent while travelling in Peru. I have described in a previous book how that, during my stay at Chosica, a little village about an hour by train from Lima, I and three adventurous companions started one afternoon to climb a high, towering mountain, the summit of which, in the intensely clear atmosphere of Peru, appeared to our sanguine senses to be easily accessible, but which was in reality no less than 10,000 feet high. After climbing for an hour or so, I and the other three had an amicable but very decided difference of opinion as to the best course to take in order to arrive at the summit with the least possible expenditure of skin and energy, and accordingly separated. I was in those days a good climber, or, at any rate, a rapid one, and in my eagerness to prove that I was right and the others ridiculously wrong, I breasted that mountain with every ounce of energy that was in me. Up and up I went without once looking back and without in the least realising that the slope up which I was pressing so light-heartedly was continually getting steeper and steeper. Even when, at last, I found that I had to use hands as well as feet in order to make any progress at all, I gave the matter no special thought, nor did the discovery in the smallest degree disturb my equanimity. My whole mind and all my energies were concentrated on the task which I had set before me, which was that of getting to the top of one of the very minor peaks of the Andes before the rest of the party. A sudden realisation of the true state of affairs was brought home to me very vividly and in the following way. I had taken hold of a large rock about the size of a chest of drawers and was hauling myself up by it, when it slowly toppled over towards me. I had just time to fling myself to one side before the rock, missing me by little more than an inch, went crashing down the mountain side, raising thunderous music as it went and dislodging a hundred others in its fall. Then it was that my nerve temporarily left me and for five minutes or so I was incapable of moving. I saw that I was on a slope so steep as to be almost worthy of the name of precipice. This slope was not formed of solid rock, but of large boulders which very obviously were only just able to hang on to the mountain side by the skin of their teeth so to speak. It seemed to me that even the rock on which I sat was slowly shifting its position. Above my head was the summit of the mountain, looking like a needle, and below me—at an angle so steep that from my sitting position I could see nothing but empty space—was a long stretch of precipitous slope entirely composed, as I knew, of loose and insecure boulders.

For some five minutes, as I said, my nerve—most unjustifiably, I must admit—gave way. I sat or, rather, lay for a time in a kind of panic. Then reason and common-sense came to the rescue and told me that—although to struggle any further up was obviously full of danger—there could be no real danger in descent, for the very good reason that any rock which I dislodged was bound to go down in advance of me. Reassured by this Euclidian reflection and spurred on to immediate action by a realisation that it was growing dark, I pulled myself together and began sliding cautiously down the mountain side. My calculation that all falling rocks would precede me in the descent proved to be rather too optimistic, for quite a number which I must in some way have irritated as I passed, came whizzing after me in most vindictive fashion. Curiously enough, my bombardment by these exceedingly well aimed rocks—although constituting a much more real danger than that which had unnerved me—did not frighten me in the least.

They rather amused me than otherwise. All that I had to do was to keep a sharp look-out upwards, so as not to be taken by surprise. So long as I could see them coming, I felt the most complete confidence in my power to dodge them, if only by a matter of inches, just as a boxer dodges his opponent's fist. It was merely a question of " eye," and, as a test of " eye," rather interesting than the reverse.

It was in a self-analytical mood that I walked home that evening, but, try as I would, I could find no working solution of the problem as to why my nerve had deserted me because a rock had given way under me as I climbed, and had yet been absolutely unaffected by the rock-bombardment to which I had been subjected by the outraged mountain as I made my way down.

CHAPTER XII

OPERA AND PLAY

We are accustomed, in these latter days, to interpret the word Opera as meaning a dramatic and, usually, a tragic play presented to the audience in song, and in song only. If there are no spoken parts it becomes Grand Opera; if there are, it descends to the level of Light or Comic Opera. We go to the Opera to hear music and for no other purpose—unless we happen to be ladies with handsome tiaras or Paris frocks to display—and in any and every case we pretend to go to hear the music. It is a curious fact, however, that, in the merry days of the Georges, music would appear to have been an entirely secondary consideration to opera-goers. The principal feature of the entertainment was always dancing. Horace Walpole, writing in 1742, says: "The Duke of Montagu tells me that this year there is to be an Opera of dancing with singing between the Acts." It is to be observed that he does not say "an Opera with much dancing," but "an Opera of dancing." The singing between the Acts was obviously a purely supplementary attraction, and was, in no sense, a necessary part of the "Opera." It must be remembered that in those days they had no Verdis, Gounods, Wagners and Puccinis. They had Gluck, or were just beginning to have Gluck, but even when Mozart came, on the top of Gluck, his quaint operas created no sort of enthusiasm and, as far as one can judge, would not have been endured without much dancing to sweeten them. So, up to the close of the eighteenth century, dancing continued to form the chief attraction of the Opera and was certainly the part on which most criticism and interest was focussed. Mrs. Billington seems to have been by far the most popular singer of the post-Revolution eighteenth century. She was English-born, but half a German, being the daughter of a man named Carl Weichsell. Catalani and Grassini had fine voices, but neither of them appears to have been a popular favourite. From the present-day standpoint, the most curious feature in the letters and memoirs of the time is that—although these singers are frequently mentioned as singing, and singing well, and—in Mrs. Billington's case—even as singing "divinely," we are never told *what* they sang. Nowadays this is our chief concern. There is very little interest to us in being told that anyone sang well unless we are also told what he, or she, sang. The explanation of the Georgian indifference lies of course in the fact that they had no emotional and dramatic operas to thrill them in their day. All popular singing was of the bravura type—trills, runs and shakes, which the singer added according to his or her discretion—so that it really did not much matter what was being sung. The simple, emotional and dramatic *aria* had not yet arisen and did not arise till near the middle of the nineteenth century, when the works of Meyerbeer, Rossini, Weber, Verdi, Gounod and Wagner introduced an entirely new element into operatic representations—the element, that is, of continued and sustained interest in the dramatic side of the performance.

It was not till about the fourth decade in the nineteenth century that opera in its present form began to take hold of London Society, and then mainly owing to the personal popularity of Mario, Alboni and Grisi, who was Grassini's niece. Then came Jenny Lind and the world went mad over her. It has probably been given to few people now living to have heard the Swedish Nightingale, but I can claim to be one of them. When I was a little boy of seven I had a long and tiresome illness at Cannes, and Jenny Lind used to come and sit by my bedside and sing to me. She must have been about forty-five at the time. I had no knowledge of the immense honour which was being done me. I loved the name of Jenny Lind; it sounded to me so pretty and I looked forward to her visits with feverish joy; but that she was the world's greatest singer I did not know. I cannot in the least remember what she sang to me, but I do remember thinking that angels in Heaven must sing and look as she did.

Three years later, as an immense treat—it being my birthday—I was allowed to see a real opera. We were in Dublin at the time and I was taken to the Viceregal box and given a seat at the back. The Opera was Gounod's *Faust*, which was then quite new, having been first given in England in 1863. I cannot claim—much as I should like to—that the performance filled me with uninterrupted enjoyment. All the love-making part bored me almost to the point of sleep, but I took a delighted interest in the devil, whom my strictly religious upbringing had always led me to believe was an unpleasant companion and one to be uncompromisingly shunned but whom I now, on the contrary, found to be an entirely jolly dog and infinitely more entertaining than any of his companions in the cardboard streets of Nuremburg. When Mephistopheles was off the stage, my interest waned and I think that, towards the end of the performance, my eyelids drooped a little, but in the last Act they were brought up with a snap by an unrehearsed and altogether unexpected incident.

In those days it was the invariable and very proper custom for the erring Faust to delight the eyes and stimulate the morals of the audience by sinking slowly and penitentially into hell, which was always conveniently situated just below the floor of Marguerite's prison cell—so close below, in fact, that blue flames would leap up and envelop the gay deceiver as he sank slowly through the floor to his doom. The tenor, on the occasion in question, was an enormously fat man, and when the moment arrived for the expiation of his sins, he stuck fast in the trap-door which connected Marguerite's cell with the lower regions. Shouts of delirious laughter rose, as may well be imagined, from all parts of the building, to which I can answer for it that one corner of the Viceregal box contributed its full share in shrill treble tones; nor did the laughter in any way abate when a stentorian voice from the gallery shouted out: "Cheer up, boys; hell's full."

Many years later I witnessed another unrehearsed effect in connection with the same opera, which struck me as being little less comical, but which, curiously enough, passed almost unnoticed in a crowded house. The title-rôle, on this occasion, was in the hands of Signor Zenatello, a most efficient and sweet-voiced tenor who, curiously enough, had started his professional career—like Jean de Reszké—as a baritone. Unlike Jean de Reszké, however, he was a very real tenor and could take and hold the high C in "Salve dimora" as well as any tenor I ever heard, with the possible exception of Caruso. The performance in question was at Covent Garden and I arrived in my stall—as I always do when this particular opera is given—in time to hear the beautiful but little-known overture played. In due course the curtain rose and, for a time, the opera proceeded on smooth and conventional lines. When, however, the moment arrived for Faust to be transformed from a decrepit old apothecary into a blooming and seductive youth, the procedure was very wide of the conventional. This transformation is effected in various ways according to the caprice of the officiating tenor. Sometimes he withdraws into a dark corner where—after a certain amount of ill-concealed fumbling—he sheds the chrysalis husk of his dressing-gown and beard and flutters forward as a radiant, silk-tighted butterfly. Sometimes he retires bodily behind a screen, murmuring tenor notes the while, so as to distract attention from what he is really doing, and emerges in due course in his new plumage. In any event—whatever the procedure—the result is always the same, namely, that the rejuvenated Faust faces the audience in mauve tights, trunk-hose and doublet of rich material, and in the flaxen bobbed-hair wig which was characteristic of the period. Judge then of my amazement when I saw Zenatello step forward to sing " Il voglio il piacer " in the homely and most un-Faustian attire of check trousers and a short black coat and, moreover, with a close-cropped black head and no make-up whatever! So he remained of course till the end of the Act, singing superbly but looking absurdly incongruous by the side of the scarlet-tighted Mephistopheles. In the second Act he appeared in conventional attire—tights, tunic and flaxen wig—and so of course remained till the end of the piece.

The extraordinary part of the whole incident, to my mind, was that none of the audience seemed to be either surprised or amused at the sight of the mediæval young Faust appearing in the homely garb of the modern City Clerk. The "boxes" of course, had not arrived before the first Act closed; they never do; and many of those who were present may have been seeing the opera for the first time and may have thought that check trousers and a short black coat was the one form of dress which the susceptible Marguerite found irresistible. Also it must be remembered that the stage during the first Act is very dark and, on the occasion in question, I think the management must purposely have made it darker than usual with the idea of drawing as thick a veil as possible over the catastrophe which they foresaw; for what of course had happened was that Zenatello had been made late by some unforeseen accident and had only arrived at Covent Garden just in time to throw on the old man's beard and dressing-gown and run on to the stage.

Another very unrehearsed effect indeed of which I was the astonished witness was at Her Majesty's Theatre, where, at the end of one of the scenes in a well-known opera, which was warmly applauded, the entire chorus rushed forward to the footlights and, in a variety of languages and with outstretched hands, begged for coppers from the audience on the plea that the enterprising manager had not paid them for a month and that they were starving. There they stood in a long gesticulating row, with hands extended and gibbering mouths, saying many things in many tongues among which "We starve," "Him no pay us," "Please money" were most conspicuous. In response—after a few shy pioneer coins had been chucked from the gallery—a perfect hail of shillings, sixpences and pennies fell on the stage and continued falling for some minutes and, while the chorus scrambled and fought wildly for the rolling coins, the offending manager came forward and tried, in a smooth speech, to explain away the accusations levelled against him. The gallery, however, would have none of him. They first howled at him and then pelted him with pennies, not chucked on as before, but hurled with all the strength of strong right arms. The position became untenable and, after stopping one or two whizzing pennies with his waistcoat, the manager beat a hurried and undignified retreat, while the chorus kept darting out of the sides to pick up the projectiles that missed the manager. It was an extraordinary scene to be witness of in a London theatre, but I believe it made Mr. M——'s fortune for, for several nights following, the house was packed to the roof with cricketers, base-ballers and other champion throwers, with pockets bulging with coppers and thirsting for an opportunity of exercising their skill on the waistcoat of the niggardly manager. The starving chorus, however, were no doubt temporarily satisfied with the manna from the skies which had dropped into their extended hands for, to the bitter disappointment of the athletic audience which had assembled, the remaining performances shaped themselves on strictly conventional lines.

In the thronged, energetic and progressive days in which we live, good tenors—whether native products or importations from abroad—abound both on concert platforms and on the operatic stage, but in mid-Victorian days they were as scarce as cowslips in March. It was the first, second, third and thirty-ninth Article of mid-Victorian belief that Mario was the only tenor there ever had been or ever would be. "There are no tenors now," was the constant wail of Society. I was brought up in this belief and accepted it placidly as a dogma for, beyond question, there was a sad dearth of these bright soarers above the line in the sweet and simple 'sixties. There was of course Sims Reeves and, after him, Edward Lloyd and Maas, the Dutchman, but the first of these was in his decline and none of the three sang in opera. That was the real trouble. What the Society ladies pined for was an Italian operatic tenor. An English one or a Dutch one would not have satisfied the yearnings of their hearts, however perfect his vocalisation. It is difficult to believe that Society, during the first half of Queen Victoria's reign, can have been very patriotic. The lower orders were of course intensely patriotic in the sense that they hated "furriners" and everything "furrin" with a fervour which was three-parts contempt; and it was perhaps in a straining to show their elevation above such lowly and parochial ideas that the ladies and gentlemen of the *beau monde* turned up their noses at everything English and turned up their eyes and clasped their hands and raved esctatically over everything which was French or Italian. During the later Georgian period this craze seems to have been even more accentuated. In the conversations and correspondence of the fashionable world of that day, French was used to the utmost limits possible. No one ever made use of an English expression if they could possibly find a French equivalent. In the middle of the century this curious custom was still in ceaseless evidence, but was markedly on the decline, that is to say that, in the case of the younger generation, French idioms were only used where the English alternative was not supposed to be an exact fit; but the older people still used French wherever they possibly could and without any idea in their minds of increased intelligibility. Now, after the lapse of a hundred years, the practice is completely dead among the young, but is still persisted in to a certain extent by the silver-headed.

Italy came very close behind France in Society favour and, in certain departments, may be said to have held the first place in London's affections. In Heath's *Picturesque Annual*, a Society periodical of the day, all the heroes of its romantic tales were Beppos, Giuseppes and Giacomos, twanging guitars or steering gondolas through the picturesque but malodorous canals of Venice. Mere Richards and Roberts held no place at all in Society's estimation as heroes of romance. I suppose we really were rather stupid and insular in those days and the more artistic temperament of the French and Italians appealed irresistibly to an aristocracy which was yearning to shed some of the admirable but Bœotian characteristics associated with that age. In any case, anything French or Italian or even Spanish was gushed over. Drawing-room warblers sang nothing but French or Italian songs. To have sung an English song would have been considered degrading in the extreme.

If this was so in our drawing-rooms—as it unquestionably was—it can readily be understood that the tenor who sought the plaudits of Society in opera had, before all else, to be Italian. No matter how divinely Edward Lloyd may have sung, he would never have stirred the same enthusiasm in the breasts of Mid-Victorian Society that he would had his name ended in i or o. Besides, as we all know, he eschewed the operatic stage and the ladies wanted an *operatic* tenor, not an oratorio or concert singer. The craving is understandable. Even in the case of Italians, what a difference there is between Signor Topnoti on the concert platform in a black frock-coat, slightly bald and with a faulty complexion, and holding a piece of music stiffly before him, and the same famous singer rouged, powdered and wigged, with crimson hose on one leg and buff hose on the other, clasping his breast in amorous fervour before Marguerite or Juliette or Leonora! We are all conscious of the emotional difference. Besides there is no shadow of doubt that, under the latter conditions, Signor Topnoti sings incomparably better. He can work himself up to concert pitch by swinging his arms about. Even if he begins a little lamely, he soon gets warmed to his work and his notes pour forth in a more impassioned and more mellowed stream. And besides, he looks so handsome and gallant that the ladies cannot help but wave their hands and cheer.

So when Mario came along in the third decade of the century, carolling out his dulcet notes, of course the ladies all went mad about him and even men gushed in sympathy. He was the fairy Prince for whom they had all been waiting so long.

In these latter days, when Grand Opera has ceased to be the luxury of the favoured few and when, in response to the increased demand, tenors of every nationality and of no mean merit have sprung up like crocuses on a warm March day, one sometimes wonders a little whether Mario was really the prodigy that the early and Mid-Victorians thought him. I hae ma doots. Two thoughts present themselves which are mainly responsible for the "doots." In the first place Mario's only competitive rivals for the applause of the "boxes" were Rubini and Tamberlik, neither of whom was a *persona grata* with the fashionable world. Tamberlik was an immense favourite with the gallery, but the boxes voted him "too noisy." I am assured, however, by Lord Coventry, who frequently heard them both, that Tamberlik's voice was incomparably superior to Mario's and was, in fact, one of the finest tenor voices ever heard upon the operatic stage. His great piece was Meyerbeer's *Prophète*, the music of which neither of his rivals was capable of singing. But in the eyes and ears of Society Mario was "the one and only."

In the second place it is very difficult to believe that the Victorians were, in any respect, qualified to decide as to the merits or otherwise of any singer who stood before them for judgment. They had many sterling merits, but they were not artistic. They were in fact totally devoid of any artistic discrimination; otherwise they could not possibly have left, as sad legacies to their grandchildren, so many gruesome monuments of all that is inartistic and distressing to the eye. In matters musical there is very distinct evidence that they had no judgment and indeed no original opinions of their own. When *Faust* was first produced in England in 1863 London Society, which was still gushing over *Trovatore, Traviata* and *Rigoletto*, entirely failed to appreciate Gounod's masterpiece. It afterwards modified its opinions in deference to French enthusiasm over the music, but another ten or twelve years had to pass before it achieved its full popularity in England.

Mario, who was practically an amateur, had a small sweet voice which no doubt was very effective in the limited spaces of Her Majesty's Theatre, Haymarket, or of the old Covent Garden Theatre, which was burned in 1856, and which was little more than half the size of the present building. He had very little dramatic power, but was an ideal stage lover with a graceful and gentlemanly deportment. It is very much to be doubted whether—judged by modern standards and by the vocal exigencies of the present Covent Garden Theatre—he would have been classed as more than a drawing-room warbler.

But, in the 'forties and early 'fifties, Society prostrated itself in the mud before him. He was the handsome, well-born, romantic Italian tenor for whose coming it had so long been waiting. It raved over him even after his imperfectly trained voice had begun to go before its time. He was still the one and only Mario! Then Mario married Grisi and retired, and Society switched its favour on to Adelina Patti. I heard Patti in the 'seventies in the *Barbière.* She was singing at that time with Nicolini who—although an Italian and a tenor—was so far below standard that it was impossible even for the most kindly disposed people to rave over him. But over Patti they raved without stint.

Patti was a small and vivacious woman with a light flexible voice of no great power or depth. The fact that she herself preferred singing in a light semi-comic opera, such as the *Barbière*, to any other is sufficient proof of the type of work she thought herself best fitted for. I heard her sing again during the Boer War at a very fashionable and expensive performance given at Drury Lane in aid of one of the War Funds. She had never taken the part of Juliette in Gounod's opera and had an over-mastering desire to sing the great love-scene. Alvarez took the part of Romeo. They only sang the one Act, which was transposed in order to help out Patti's failing powers, and they sang in French. It was a pathetic performance. No more unfortunate associate than Alvarez could possibly have been chosen, for he was a *tenore robusto* of tremendous power and in the hey-day of his youth. In the actual duets he restrained himself most gallantly, but, when it came to Romeo's and Juliette's alternate denials of the approach of dawn, " *Non, ce n'est pas le jour, ce n'est pas l'allouette, C'est le doux rossignol, confidant de l'amour,*" then his artistic temperament got the better of him and he fairly smothered the poor little generous, courageous woman who had come so nobly out from her retirement to try to help her adopted country.

In the 'seventies and early 'eighties there was very little Grand Opera and such as there was Society stubbornly declined to patronise. As far as the *beau monde* was concerned, opera had died with Mario. Since him there had been no tenors. There was Patti, of course, the Queen of song, but there were no tenors. It was useless to go. Then came a gallant attempt at a revival under the auspices of Lord and Lady de Grey. Albani, Nillsen and Pauline Lucca were the sopranos and the tenors were Caylus, Tamagno and Francesco Marconi. Scalchi provided a most beautiful and distinctive contralto for most of the operas given. The revival, however, did not "take." The complaint still was that there were no tenors worth going to Covent Garden for. Tamagno, it is true, had a voice like a bull, but he stubbornly refused to roar in anything except *Otello* and, besides, his voice had not that sweet sympathetic timbre for which Society yearned. So the 'eighties grew to larger numbers, and, towards the end, the de Reszké brothers burst upon the London musical firmament and at once had the whole of Society at their feet. It was a curious fact that the fashionable world of London, who had so long and so patiently been waiting for an Italian operatic tenor to adore, should at length—after all these years—focus its adoration upon a singer who was neither an Italian nor a tenor. Yet so it was. Magnificent as Jean de Reszké's voice was, and superb as was his singing and acting and general deportment, he was nevertheless not a tenor. When he came to the high C in "Salve dimora," instead of chesting it or even taking it falsetto, as many a good but timid tenor has done, he frankly dropped about four tones, thereby, it must be owned, greatly marring the effect of the *aria*.

However, Society raved over him, as it had not raved over anybody since the days of Mario, and certainly far more than it ever raved over the incomparable Caruso. It must be remembered, however, that Caruso came on the top of a lot of really good tenors who—even though not so good as he—were still singers of very high merit. The de Reszkés, on the other hand, came after a very prolonged famine and were therefore rather in the nature of manna in the wilderness. Nor was Society at that date efficiently equipped for criticism, for it had held severely aloof from Covent Garden for two decades and there were no Carl Rosa or Beecham Companies to educate audiences operatically in those days. The Carl Rosa Company was touring the provinces in the 'eighties but, to the best of my recollection, they gave no performances in London in those days.

Edouard de Reszké, the younger of the two brothers, was but little behind Jean in popular favour. Victor, the youngest of the three, and reputed to have the best voice, never sang in London nor, I believe, did he ever take up singing as a profession.

There can be no doubt that the two Polish brothers conferred an immense benefit on London Society, for they were the direct means of restoring interest in Covent Garden opera. The boxes, which for as long as many could remember, had either stood derelict or else been given over to the ignoble, now began to have blazoned on their doors the names of England's greatest and best. If the occupier of the stall in the fourth row had turned round to face the house between the Acts, he would have been confronted with such a blaze of beauty and diamonds and brilliant costumes as Covent Garden had probably never displayed since the day when it was built in 1858, and certainly such as it can make no attempt to display in these present grim days of super-tax.

While London was still in the full throes of its infatuation over the de Reszkés, the whole standard of operatic singing at Covent Garden was suddenly raised with a jerk by the descent upon London of an Australian soprano named Melba. It must be recorded to the credit of the Covent Garden audiences —who as a rule are slow to accept new singers—that they instantly recognised that Melba's singing was of a class such as no one then living had listened to. In the light of the new standard which she set up all other contemporary sopranos at once sank to the second class. They were not " in it," as the saying is.

An admirable Spanish tenor named Gayarré at the same time raised the standard of singing on the men's side, so that from the purely musical and histrionic—as distinguished from the more social—point of view, Covent Garden began to provide real good fare for its customers.

Melba, at her best, was a syren who would have lured Ulysses and all his crew across the Sahara desert. No other singer, within living memory, has sung with quite the same ease and the same purity of tone. No other singer's voice has possessed quite the same peculiar penetrating *timbre.* To my mind the great charm of Melba's singing was the extraordinary facility with which she rendered passages over which less gifted singers seemed in danger of bursting blood-vessels. She never deigned to call in the assistance of the arm-waving exercises with which her rivals—if she had any—helped out their high notes. It was this contempt for the conventionalities of operatic arm-action which—with a certain class of critic—secured for Melba the reputation of being "cold." There are certain unwritten but rigid rules with regard to operatic interpretation which are not lightly to be disregarded or the audience will surely resent it. They resent it if the burly villagers, or courtiers, or soldiers neglect to raise their right arms to Heaven at the end of their chorus. Even their brimming wine-cups must be flourished in the air. It is the custom. The dying heroine must not twitter out her final messages to earth. No, although dying of poison or starvation, she must nevertheless pour forth the high vibrating notes of full vigour. It is the custom. So is it the custon for the heroine, when about to deliver herself of a high B, to take two steps towards the footlights and either convulsively clutch her bosom or else fling wide both her arms. If she neglects to do this, the audience considers itself cheated and dubs her "cold." So Melba was voted cold by some, but the criticism was ill-considered.

I was once witness to an unrehearsed scene which would seem to prove beyond any question or argument that Melba's voice was not only not cold, but that it had in it most rare and moving qualities. Melba was, some twenty-three years ago, paying a visit to my brother, the Duke of Abercorn, at Barons Court, during which—with her usual unaffected good nature—she used to gladden our souls with much sweet music. One evening we were all sitting in the Music-room, with Melba at the piano alternately singing, playing and whistling, for she is as brilliant an artiste at the last two accomplishments as she is at the first. The Music-room at Barons Court, it must be explained, is a circular room with a domed ceiling and four doors at equal distances from one another, one of which leads into a but little-frequented room known as the Black Library. Melba entertained us for quite a long while and at last, as a *finale*, broke into the "Banks of Allan Water." She sang through all three verses and, as she finished, we became aware of strange gurgling sounds coming from the direction of the Black Library. One of the party in some alarm ran to the door and flung it open, whereupon we discovered to our amazement that in the Black Library was assembled, as an invisible audience, the whole of the domestic staff, all the female members of which were sobbing convulsively. The last verse of "Allan Water" had broken them down. What higher tribute could possibly be paid to the sympathetic quality of a singer's voice?

The summer of 1905 probably saw the highest level ever reached by opera at Covent Garden. Throughout that season we had Melba, Caruso and Scotti, and what more glorious trio could any music lover desire?

In the field of drama proper, my earliest recollections are of Taylor's series of plays, *'Twixt Axe and Crown*, *The Turn of the Tide*, *Joan of Arc*, etc. In all of these plays, to which I and my brother were allowed to go because they were eminently suited to our tender age, the part of the heroine was played by a certain Mrs. Rousby, who was a very poor actress but so strikingly beautiful that she drew full houses in spite of her poor acting. My brother and I, who used to go to these plays under the guardianship of the family hall-porter, were much too young to appreciate or even to realise Mrs. Rousby's extraordinary beauty, but a thing which we did thoroughly appreciate was her equally extraordinary pronunciation. In an effort, I suppose, to convince the world that she was a great actress, she mouthed and ranted in a way that filled both our youthful hearts with unbounded joy, and for many years to come provided us with a model for imaginary dialogues, recitations and songs. "Een the glawming, aw ma durraleeng," was one of the poems which, when recited with the aid of the Rousby pronunciation, was considered most effective. We had several others of the same type.

About the same date we saw Tom Robertson's *School* at the Prince of Wales Theatre in Tottenham Street, with Lady Bancroft, at that time Marie Wilton, taking the part of the school-girl. It was a good play and a great success, but a little above our heads. Taylor's melodramas appealed to us far more.

It is a long flight from *School* and Marie Wilton to the stage productions of the present day, and while making the flight and looking down reflectively on the broad field of recollections that it opens to view, it is impossible to avoid making a descent as we pass over the name of another and a more recent Marie. *Dorothy*, with Marie Tempest in the title-rôle, was one of the most remarkable productions that London has ever seen, if only for this reason that, although no more than a comic opera or operetta, it included in its cast three "star" singers, any one of whom alone would have been a sufficient attraction to draw crowded houses. It is difficult to conceive a more effective trio in such music than Marie Tempest, Ben Davies and Hayden Coffin, and all three sang throughout as though they thoroughly enjoyed their work. The contralto, necessary to complete the quartette, was changed several times, but in no single case did she come anywhere near the standard of the other three. There can be no better proof of the superlative merit of those three singers than the complete failure of *Dorothy* each time that Cellier's operetta has been revived with other principals.

The operetta in itself—apart from the merit of the performers—is remarkable from the fact that it exploits two heroes. The baritone music, as written for the second hero, was not considered worthy of so great an artiste as Hayden Coffin, and so the song which proved one of the great hits of the piece, " You are Queen of my heart to-night," was interpolated, just as " Dio possente " was interpolated in the original score of *Faust* for the benefit of Valentino and " Quando te lieta " for the benefit of Siebel.

Great, however, as Ben Davies and Hayden Coffin were in their respective parts, the mainstay and main attraction of the piece was unquestionably Marie Tempest. This name is now famous as that of an extremely clever and attractive actress but, in the days of *Dorothy*, she was not only that, but one of the most entrancing singers that ever delighted the ears of an audience. I think I saw *Dorothy* fifteen times, and my greatest of many great delights, in watching it, was to see and hear Marie Tempest sing "Be wise in time, oh Phyllis mine." In the crescendo parts of this song she would literally quiver with animation from stem to stern, or—to use a less nautical and perhaps more polite metaphor —she would vibrate from top to toe, like the string of a harp that has been pulled and let go. She was a delight to see no less than to hear.

Reminiscences of opera and operetta raise in the mind certain doubts and queries. Do we, as a nation, really like music or do we only try, very hard, to like it? And again, What is music? " Are you fond of music ? " your neighbour at dinner asks you, and you invariably reply " Yes." No one has ever been known to give an unqualified " No " to that question. But what does the question really mean ? Music is only a way of expressing ideas by a combination of sounds. Some of the ideas so expressed may be pleasant and others may be repugnant to us. Is it sane or even truthful to say we like them all ? It seems to me about as sensible for anyone to ask, " Do you like music ? " as it would be if they asked, " Do you like climate ? " Yes, the reply would be to the latter question, we like climate when it is the sort of climate we like; but we don't like the Gold Coast or the North Pole. A polar bear likes climate, but he does not like the Gold Coast, and a nigger particularly dislikes the North Pole. It means everything to him that is harsh and unsympathetic. So, to the emotional temperament, the portrayal of a thunderstorm or of a murder or of villainous conspiracies by means of a combination of discordant sounds brings no pleasure. It is clever, no doubt, but it is not pleasing. In the minds of the technical students of certain schools, however, such discordant sounds, by reason of their clever construction, arouse an admiration which approaches ecstasy. They may even give them emotional pleasure; one does not know. It is perhaps because we are so unemotional a race that constructive ingenuity in music seems to arouse more enthusiasm than emotional appeal, or is it merely that emotional appeal is out of fashion for the moment ? Perhaps a little of both. I am not musical, but I know people who are, and of one of these—an eminent musician—I inquired, not long ago, why melody was such a complete stranger to modern composition. " Because modern composers cannot write melody," was his instantaneous reply. " Anyone can learn to write this modern stuff; it is more or less mechanical. I should never be surprised to hear that the Americans had invented a machine which could turn out modern music by the yard. But they will never invent a machine which will compose melody. Melody is the inspiration of genius."

I pondered on his words and found comfort in them, for to me music without melody is as a shell without a soul. That a time will come when there will be a revulsion of feeling in favour of melody is hardly to be doubted. Just as the fashion in silver passes from the severely plain to the lavishly ornate and then back again to plain, so will the harshness of modern compositions give way in time to a more soothing combination of sounds.

CHAPTER XIII

TALES OF KENSINGTON BARRACKS

In the halcyon days when my gallant and cherry-breeked regiment, the 11th Hussars, was quartered at Hounslow, it became necessary, in the interests of the Empire, for one troop to be detached temporarily from the parent stem and to be established as an independent unit in Kensington Barracks; not so much for the defence of the good citizens of Church Street and neighbourhood as for the purpose of furnishing two smartly turned-out mounted orderlies *per diem* to the Horse Guards. For this responsible position my troop was selected, or rather the troop of which I was the subaltern and Captain Thompson the commander. Captain Thompson, or "Tommie," as we all called him, was my greatest friend in the regiment, and the selection of our troop for this particular duty was a source of unbounded satisfaction to both of us, for—although the post was a responsible one and very properly, as we thought, assigned to the smartest troop in the regiment—the military duties which fell upon the shoulders of the two officers attached to the troop were astonishingly light, being, in fact, exactly what they chose to make them.

Feeling, therefore, as we did, that regimental routine by itself would not provide an adequate outlet for our surplus energies, we began to look about us for suitable ways—outside the Queen's service—of employing our spare moments. Our first strategic move in this direction was to establish a joint stable at Aylesbury for purposes of hunting with the Bicester Hounds or with Baron Rothschild's Staghounds, and during the winter months this joint stable of ours afforded us much pleasant relaxation from the strain of our somewhat monotonous military duties. On the approach of spring, however, this door was closed and it was felt by both of us that, in order to fill up the interval till next winter came round, we must search in other fields for the safety-valve for our surplus energy, which we both felt was so badly needed. To Tommie must be yielded the honour of having first suggested that we should occupy our leisure moments and, at the same time, it was hoped, increase our insufficient incomes by running two or three hansom cabs for hire. In favour of this plan it may be stated that, although Kensington Barracks only sheltered one troop, it had stable accommodation for half a regiment, and it seemed a pity that all this spare stabling should not, if possible, be turned to profitable account. A hansom-cab establishment was obviously the very thing for which these large, empty stables had been designed.

No sooner had we come to this conclusion than we set about putting our plan into practice. A limited number of very superior, smart hansoms had just been launched upon the streets of London by Lord Shrewsbury, and I think it was the success of these Shrewsbury cabs which was responsible, in the first instance, for inspiring Tommie and me with the idea of running similar (and, if possible, better) cabs in competition with Lord Shrewsbury's. At any rate, whatever may have been our first source of inspiration, we both entered into the scheme with enthusiasm. We invested in three hansoms, which we bought from Mr. Forder, in St. Martin's Lane, and which we had decorated with smart yellow wheels and with yellow silk blinds to the windows. Two little bunches of artificial roses pinned to the side curtains added an artistic touch to the already elegant appointments of the interior. It was hoped that our superior horses, our beautifully polished brass harness with its smart yellow brow-bands, and our tall-hatted drivers of more or less distinguished appearance, would lend to our hansoms an attractiveness which even the most confirmed pedestrians would find it impossible to resist.

We bought all our horses at Tattersall's and the limit beyond which we determined not to bid was twenty-seven guineas. For this modest price we were able to pick up some very useful and more or less ornamental animals. Before these new purchases of ours were relegated to the ignoble task of drawing cabs for hire, it was my invariable practice to give them the opportunity of displaying their talents in higher fields and, to this end, I used to rail them down to Aylesbury and give them a day's hunting, so as to make sure that we had not, by chance, picked up something of phenomenal sporting value which would be wasted as a cab-horse.

One day I had bought—within our maximum figure—an extremely good-looking liver-coloured chestnut. His legs were clean, his shape was perfect and his age reasonable, and I felt confident that I had picked up a real bargain on which I would be able to show the way to some of the impetuous followers of the Bicester Hunt. Accordingly, on the first occasion when a suitable meet was advertised, I railed my new purchase down to Aylesbury and from there rode him on to the meet.

His springy action and the elastic feel of the horse under me confirmed me in my opinion that I had—for some unexplained reason—secured a real good horse at an absurd price.

We were some little time before finding a fox that day and, growing a little impatient of the delay, and being very eager to learn what my mount was capable of in the way of jumping, I selected a nice, confidential, easy-looking hedge and, taking my liver-coloured chestnut by the head, rammed him at it. He never attempted to refuse, galloped straight into it and turned over in the next field. This was a little discouraging, but I was young and enthusiastic and I felt that perhaps all that the horse needed was a little practice, for he was evidently a bold horse and with that shape he could not possibly turn out other than a good one. So, having relieved myself of a certain amount of superfluous mud, I remounted and awaited further opportunities. I had not long to wait. About ten minutes later, a delightful little fence presented itself to my view—just the very thing for a rather raw and unschooled, but willing, horse. With various forms of encouragement I urged him at it. Once more " he faced it true and brave," but once more he galloped straight through it and pitched on his head in the next field. So did I. While I was gloomily engaged in trying to restore some semblance of respectability to my one-time smart and upright hat, a chatty stranger, who had previously noticed my horse's good looks and to whom I had (in part) revealed the secret of its purchase, rode up to me and said :

" Do you know, I think that horse of yours is blind."

" Blind ! " I exclaimed.

" Yes," he said, " I have been watching him pretty closely and I am practically certain that he is blind."

My damaged hat was still in my hand and, with it, I made sundry mock attacks upon my horse's mud-plastered face. Without so much as the flick of an eyelid, he gazed placidly back at me with bland, benignant eyes, over which I now noticed for the first time a faint blue film. There could be no further doubt about it. He was blind.

I disentangled myself from the no-longer-welcome enclosures of the Bicester country by means of friendly gates, and, having gained the high road, I thoughtfully rode my handsome horse back to Aylesbury. From that day on he made no further appearance in the hunting-field, but, between the shafts of our hansoms, he did good service for many a day.

The proximity of Kensington Barracks to Tattersall's and the practically unlimited stable accommodation at the disposal of Tommie and myself was rather conducive to recklessness in buying—recklessness, that is to say, in quantity rather than in quality. If our cab-horses turned out unsuitable, we simply sent them back to Tattersall's, to be sold for what they would fetch, and we generally got pretty much the same as we had given for them—sometimes even more. There was not much risk in buying at the prices we gave.

I made one or two good buys outside the field of cab-horses. I bought a beautiful little bay five years old belonging to a friend of mine in the Blues. I asked his advice about bidding for the horse, and he strongly advised me to have nothing to do with it, as the horse, as far as he could make out, had something wrong with it. In any case, he said, it could not move properly and was therefore useless for any purpose. However, the horse was so good-looking and, to all appearances, so absolutely sound, that, in spite of this friendly advice, I bought him for fifty guineas. I rode him two days later in Rotten Row and found that what my friend had said was perfectly true. The horse undoubtedly could not go. He rolled about like a ship at sea, shook me to pieces and made very little progress. This was of course discouraging, but I could see no valid reason for this peculiarity of the horse's and, as my vet. could find nothing wrong with him, I persevered with the horse and, in the end, was rewarded by finding that he gradually went better and better and finally galloped as well as his appearance told one that he ought to gallop. At last his paces were so good that I gave him a day with the Queen's and he jumped and galloped well. In the end he turned out one of the best hunters I ever owned; won three regimental races and, when I left the regiment and the army, realised three times what I had given for him. What the original trouble was I cannot understand. It was certainly mysterious.

My most exciting buy, however, was Emily. Emily came up to Tattersall's with the reputation of having won some steeplechases in Ireland and with two forelegs of ominous rotundity. She was, in fact, very obviously in the condition which is usually described as "broken down." However, I liked her shape and her steeplechase record, she trotted quite soundly when I had her run up the yard, and so I bought her for eighteen guineas and transferred her to Kensington Barracks. From this most unsuitable base I then set to work to train her for an open steeplechase at Stratford-on-Avon, where the weights seemed to suit her. I had at that time in my service a very light groom who could ride eight stone or thereabouts and, at six in the morning, or as soon after as the gates were opened, we used to go into the Park and there Ballard, my groom, would give Emily a gallop of a mile or so, her forelegs being, of course, well bandaged. However, the police got, in time, to know us and to view our morning gallops unsympathetically; so I was forced to abandon Rotten Row as a training ground and, as an alternative, to walk Emily down to Richmond Park three times a week. There, on the grass by the side of the road, Ballard would give her a mile or so—always up a slight incline—and then back we walked to Kensington Barracks. The performance took exactly five hours and was not by any means amusing, but it was the only way. On the alternate days Ballard would walk and trot her in Rotten Row.

Under this very careful and laborious treatment I was able, by avoiding anything in the nature of a fast gallop and by the help of perpetual hot fomentations, to keep Emily's most insecure legs fairly cool and at the same time to get her thoroughly fit. It was immensely gratifying to my self-esteem as a trainer to see the way in which her coat began to shine and the muscle began to stand out on her neck and quarters.

At length the day of the Stratford-on-Avon meeting approached and Emily, Ballard and I made the journey down to Shakespeare's birthplace. I walked round the course and it must be owned was somewhat staggered by the size of the fences, which were markedly bigger than those on any other course which I have encountered. The fences on the Stratford-on-Avon course that year, in fact, were so big that, after the third race, a meeting of the Stewards was called and it was unanimously decided that, for the rest of the meeting, the fence next past the stand should be cut out of the course on account of the almost universal grief of which it was the occasion. So tremendously strong and thick was this fence (a quickset hedge) that—after it had been ruled out as unfair—a number of people stood on the top of it, and utilised it as a grand stand for the rest of the meeting. The unusual size of the course disturbed me a little, for it must be remembered that I had never yet been on Emily's back and had never seen her jump a fence of any sort, so that I had no idea whatever as to her ability to get round such a course as that at Stratford-on-Avon, which I believe was reckoned the biggest in England that particular year. However, one obviously had to chance something with an eighteen-guinea horse; so, in a fairly cheerful frame of mind, I saddled Emily next day when the bell rang for the second race and rode out on to the course. I was rather late in getting under way and, by the time I had left the paddock, almost all the other horses had gone down to the starting-post. I put Emily at the hurdles in the preliminary canter, and she stubbornly refused. I put her at them again, and she again stubbornly refused. Just then I saw Mr. E. P. Wilson coming along. He was later even than I was.

"For Heaven's sake, give me a lead," I shouted out to him; "I don't believe my mount can jump a blessed stick."

However, with him giving me a lead, she jumped the hurdles, but most reluctantly and in the most clumsy style imaginable.

"Oh, Lord!" I thought, "I'm going to have some fun."

Mr. Wilson and I trotted down together to the starting-post, which was at the foot of the hill.

"Forelegs a bit doubtful, I suppose," he said, squinting sideways at Emily's tell-tale bandages.

"Yes, not of the best," I allowed.

"Stiffish course this," he added, by way of cheering me up.

"Yes," I replied airily; and then added most mendaciously, and in complete forgetfulness of my remark at the preliminary hurdles: "that is why I entered her here. No course can be too big for her."

By this time we had reached the starting-post, where the starter, with an impatient frown on his brow, stood watch in hand; for we were a minute or so late. The flag fell and off we went.

We had not gone a quarter of a mile before I realised that the words which I had spoken to Mr. E. P. Wilson in semi-bravado, and certainly in absolute ignorance, were literally true. No course could be too big for Emily. She jumped like a stag. After the first fence, I led all the way round. At the fence past the stand she pecked a little, but I think that was really my fault, as I was engaged in making preconcerted signals to a friend in the ring as I passed instead of concentrating on the business on hand. I led all the way as far as the last fence and then my heart sank, for a horse called Nuthatch came thundering past me, apparently with ease. At the last hurdles, however, Nuthatch, who was leading me by two lengths, pecked badly, while Emily jumped this as beautifully as she had jumped every fence in the course. I gained three lengths at those hurdles, that is to say, I landed over them a length in front instead of being two lengths behind. I heard a tremendous roar from the ring—evidently on account of the possibilities opened by Nuthatch's stumble—and I rode the remaining hundred yards for all I was worth; but Nuthatch had the speed of us and he gradually overhauled us and won by a short head.

It was a bitter disappointment, for it really would have been an achievement to have won an open steeplechase with a horse bought for eighteen guineas and trained entirely in London. I often thought afterwards that, if I had not given that signal to my friend in the ring—which was, as a matter of fact, a signal to put me on a fiver—I should just have won; for it certainly prevented me from concentrating properly on the very big fence past the stand, which undoubtedly was worthy of every bit of concentration one could command. If I had concentrated more, she would very likely not have pecked, as she did, and Nuthatch would have had another length to overhaul. However, in that case, I should probably have reproached myself bitterly for not having backed her, so the gains, in the long run, were probably equal to the losses.

Poor Emily broke down hopelessly almost immediately after the race, and I gave her to a friend in Ireland to breed polo-ponies from. She was too small to breed hunters or 'chasers from.

I must, however, come back to our cabs. We had three of these, six drivers and about ten horses, as Tommie and I both, on occasions, put our second chargers into the public service. They ran from 9 till 4.30; then came home, changed horses and drivers and went out again from 5 till 12.30. The drivers rented the cabs from us for fifteen shillings for each of those periods during the summer months, with a graduated scale of reductions as the winter advanced. A very simple multiplication sum will bring the scholarly financier to the result that, during the summer months, our three cabs brought us in £27 per week of six days, for we never ran them on Sundays. The original cost of the three cabs was £210, of our horses about £230 and of our harness about £40. The feeding of our horses cost us a little over £200 per annum. A slightly more complicated sum than the last one will bring the inquirer to the conclusion that there was an attractive profit in our cab scheme, as of course we paid nothing for stabling. In actual practice, however, the results were not quite so golden as might appear at first sight. The largest and most decomposed fly in our otherwise sweet ointment was the repair bill. Night after night our drivers would come back with splintered spokes, broken lamps or steps twisted like corkscrews. It was never their fault, always the " other bloke's."

" Why, 'e barged into me, Sir, and then was orf before I knew where I was."

These collisions often broke the harness, which was more difficult to mend than the cabs. The first beautiful enamelled freshness began to wear off our yellow-wheeled Forders. The sight of them prancing down Piccadilly no longer caused a free fight among pedestrians as to who should have the honour of being conveyed homewards in such exquisitely-appointed carriages. With their ever-increasing shabbiness came a strike on the part of our drivers for lower rents. They were in less demand, they said, than they had been; therefore the old rents—quite fair, as they admitted, so long as the hansoms were spick and span—were no longer justified. It did not seem to occur to our discontented Jehus that the fall in the rent-value of our cabs was entirely due to their own careless and inebriate driving.

It was this mutiny on the part of our drivers, coupled with an occasional actual shortage of drivers, that first suggested to Tommie and myself that, on occasions, we might drive the cabs ourselves. There were, to our minds, two very marked advantages in this plan, the first and greatest being that we should then be in a position to judge for ourselves as to what justification there was for the drivers' demand for a reduced rent; and the second being that, by driving ourselves, we should make more money than by hiring the cabs out. We accordingly invested in two handsome beards and, disguised in these and in soft hats pulled over our eyes and mufflers round our necks, we took some of the night shifts. The night shift in summer, of course, started with a good deal of daylight and there was always the risk of our being recognised by some acquaintances in the streets; but we were quite prepared to chance any such calamity, for the consequences would not have been very dreadful, even if we had been recognised. As a matter of fact, we never were recognised, for the excellent reason that people do not as a rule see any necessity for scrutinising carefully the faces of those who drive them about in cabs.

The actual task of driving, without giving away our unprofessional status, was a comparatively simple matter, especially in my case, as I sported at that time a then fashionable, but since extinct and always absolutely unpractical, two-wheeled vehicle known as a "buggy," in which it was my custom to drive myself about all over London, so that I knew my way about fairly well. Very seldom did I find myself given directions to drive to streets of which I had never heard, and when this did happen, I merely said: "Beg pardon, sir, but I don't seem to remember where that street is," and all was well.

The results of these experimental drives of ours was that we proved up to the hilt that our rents were absolutely fair and left a good profit for the driver. I forget at the moment what our actual takings averaged, but I do remember that they covered the rent and left a handsome margin over. Our horses could all go, and the pace at which they covered the ground, coupled with the smartness of the hansoms themselves, always evoked a more generous fare than the crawling, musty, dilapidated cabs with which we were in competition could command.

I had, while piloting my own cab during the night shift, only one experience which could in any way be described as an adventure. It happened in this way. I was "plying for hire," as it was called, down Oxford Street one night, when a man in evening clothes hailed me from the pavement.

"Hi! cabby," he said, "what will you take us down to Richmond for?"

It was about eleven o'clock at night and I had no particular wish to go all the way to Richmond, so I said:

"I'll take you for a pound, sir."

"Right you are," he said, without a moment's hesitation. "Jump in, Kitty."

The lady whom he addressed as Kitty seemed, as far as I could see in the gas-light, to be a young girl of about twenty. The man appeared middle-aged and rather stout. They both climbed in and off I went. When we reached Richmond, the man gave me directions as to how to find his house, which was a biggish detached house with gates and a gravel sweep leading up to the door. The man gave me my pound without a word and he and the girl entered the house. There was a light showing through the half-moon glass panel over the front door, but, otherwise, the house was in total darkness. As he turned his latch-key and the two of them passed in, there was, I fancied, a certain nervousness and hesitation about the girl's manner, which awoke in me a sense of uneasiness. Before the door closed behind her, she turned and gave me—or I fancied she gave me—a kind of supplicating look, as though she regretted the loss of my protecting presence. What was she, I wondered? Wife, sister or daughter? It was impossible to say; but it was quite evident to me that she was nervous and that she entered the house with a certain amount of trepidation. So firmly was I convinced of this that — following some indefinable instinct — I determined to remain for some few minutes, at any rate, within hail of the house. I accordingly passed slowly out through one of the gates and drew up in the main road beyond, where I waited. What did I wait for? Well, it is hard to say, but I had it somehow at the back of my mind that everything was not quite straightforward as regarded the pair who had just entered the house. So I waited. It is difficult to say, so long after the event, how long I waited, but, as far as I can remember, it was not more than five minutes. Then, suddenly, without the slightest warning, a window at the top of the house was thrown open and the woman's voice called out:

"Cabby, cabby, wait for me."

A minute later the front door opened and out she ran, straight for my cab, into which she scrambled as though the devil was after her.

"Drive on quick," she cried.

I could see the man standing on the doorstep. He made no movement to stop her and apparently had interfered in no way with her desire to get out of the house.

"Where to, Miss?" I inquired through the trap in the top.

"Oh, back to London, please," she said.

I drove her back as far as St. Mary Abbot's

Church, which neither my horse nor I had the slightest wish to pass, for there lay our respective beds of straw or blankets, as the case might be, and it was past one o'clock and raining. Once more I looked down through the trap.

" Sorry, Miss," I said, " but I am afraid I can't take you any farther. This is where my stables are."

For quite a little while she remained silent : then she opened the door of the hansom and, standing on the footboard, spoke to me over the top of the cab. There was a lamp close by and I now saw her clearly for the first time. She was very pretty.

" The fact is," she said, " that I have got no money. I left my purse in that house and if you won't take me back, I don't see how I shall ever get home. To-morrow I could pay you."

She was a pleading and pathetic figure. I was tired and so was the horse and I had no belief that she would ever pay me; but it was raining steadily and I could not well turn my back on such an appeal.

" Where do you live, Miss ? " I asked.

She gave me an address in Bloomsbury.

" Sit down," I said, " I'll take you there."

" Oh, thank you so much," she said; " I will pay you to-morrow. I will, really."

I accepted her assurances with as good a grace as I could muster, whipped up my most unwilling horse and drove her to her home, which proved to be a lodging-house of a superior type. She thanked me profusely and asked what my fare was. I suggested ten shillings, at which she seemed relieved.

" I will give it you to-morrow morning, if you can come round about eleven," she said. I told her that the morning was not easy for me and suggested three in the afternoon instead, to which she agreed.

"What name shall I ask for, Miss?" I inquired.

"Oh, ask for Miss Goring, please," she said.

Accordingly, next afternoon, I put on all my smartest clothes and made my way back to the Bloomsbury lodging-house, where I rang the bell and asked if I could see Miss Goring. The little slavey looked at me curiously.

"What name shall I say, please?" she asked.

"Oh, say that I have come about the cab fare," I told her.

She left me standing on the doorstep and passed into the house and very shortly afterwards out came my fare of the night before. She was bareheaded and held half a sovereign between her finger and thumb. I saw then that she was extremely pretty. She had hair of a beautiful auburn shade and the faultless complexion which so often goes with such hair, and her features were very pleasing. Of me she took no notice whatever, but peered with a puzzled look up and down the street. Just as she was turning back into the house, I said:

"I think that half-sovereign is mine, isn't it?"

She gave me one look of unutterable disdain, and was just closing the door, when I added: "for bringing you back from Richmond last night."

She turned like a flash and stared at me from under frowning brows.

"Who are you?" she asked shortly.

"I am the cabby who drove you back from Richmond last night," I said.

"But I don't understand," she said, still very puzzled; "the cabby who drove me back was quite a different man—a man with a black beard."

"Well, a beard is soon slipped on," I said.

"But your voice is different and everything is different," she objected.

"Well," I said, laughing, "a sham voice is as easily put on as a sham beard, and that ten shillings really is mine."

"Well, here it is then," she said, "and thank you very much indeed."

Now came the awkward moment, for I was fully determined to learn something more about the mystery of the house at Richmond and I hardly knew how to set about it.

"I wonder if you would dine with me to-night at the Holborn Restaurant?" I asked, naming that curious example of Mid-Victorian decoration which had just been opened, as it occurred to me that it was suitably adjacent to the Bloomsbury district. She looked at me with the eye of open suspicion.

"Why do you want me to dine with you?" she asked. "I don't even know your name."

"Well," I said, "I was lucky enough to be of some little service to you last night and I thought I might possibly be of some further service, if you would let me help."

She looked at me again from under frowning brows, as though trying to read my very soul.

"Well," she said, "I'll come, but I must be home very early, for I am tired to death after last night. What's your name?"

I gave her my card and turned away with a reminder to her to be at the rendezvous at half-past seven.

Miss Goring was very punctual. During our dinner, I was able to extract from her a certain number of facts relating to her adventure of the night before. She was, it appeared, a professional singer of modest pretensions and earning a precarious livelihood by that most arduous and uncertain of all professions. A gentleman named Mr. Herbert Mansfield had admired her singing so much (she said it was the singing, but as to that I had my doubts) that he managed to obtain an introduction and then, after an acquaintance of some months, had asked her to marry him. She had agreed to the proposal, but the marriage had never taken place on account of certain difficulties which had arisen in connection with a sister of Mr. Mansfield's who kept house for him and who, for reasons of her own, was strongly opposed to the marriage. It appeared that, by the terms of their father's will, the sister had the right to share the Richmond house with her brother so long as he remained unmarried. If he married, however, the house became his property absolutely, but in that event he was bound by the terms of the will to settle £1500 a year on his sister.

Miss Goring told me that she had never seen the sister, who, as she understood, was a good deal older than her brother, but Herbert Mansfield positively assured her that she was so violently opposed to the proposed marriage as to make it extremely difficult for him to go counter to her wishes, as she was very delicate and infinitely preferred living in the Richmond house with her brother to a lonely life elsewhere on £1500 a year. It was apparently to a great extent a matter of sentiment, as Miss Mansfield was devotedly attached to the Richmond house, which had been her home from girlhood. So strong was her claim on her brother's affections that he had always told Miss Goring plainly that, without his sister's consent, it would not be possible for him to marry, but that he was not without hopes of eventually overcoming her opposition, especially if she could be induced to meet Miss Goring. So far she had always positively declined any such meeting. Two days, however, before the night when I had driven them down to Richmond, Herbert Mansfield had told Miss Goring that he believed his sister was at last giving way in the matter of the introduction, and that Miss Goring might expect to hear from her at any minute.

She was, therefore, she told me, in no way surprised when she received a telegram from Miss Mansfield suggesting an immediate meeting. This telegram she now produced from her bag and handed me across the table. It ran as follows: " Please come to Richmond to-night. Am most anxious to see you before leaving early to-morrow morning for Italy. Can provide you with things for the night—Helen Mansfield."

" Now, what would you have done ? " Miss Goring asked me. It seemed to me as though she was very anxious to justify her conduct in having undertaken the drive to Richmond.

" I suppose I should have gone," I replied. " Well, what did you do ? "

" I telegraphed to Herbert to come and see me, and when he turned up, which was not till about 10.30, I showed him his sister's telegram.

" ' Oh, you must go,' he said at once ; ' it's most important ; everything depends on your meeting Helen and making friends with her. I will come with you.'

" I did not quite like the business," she continued ; " it was so very unusual ; but I thought it worth anything to propitiate the sister. Herbert and I walked down as far as Oxford Street, talking it over, and then we saw your cab. ' There's a smart looking hansom,' he said, ' it will get us down there in no time. Shall I call him ? ' I agreed, not quite liking it, but seeing no other way, and the rest you know."

" No," I said, " I know nothing of your reasons for calling out to me to stay, or of your reasons for leaving the house."

"The sister was not there," she said. "I knew it instinctively before I had been two minutes in the house. There was, as far as I could make out, no one in the house at all, except Herbert; or, at any rate, there was no one to be seen. That was when I opened the window and called out to you."

"Then the telegram was a fake?" I said.

"Yes, I suppose so; in fact it must have been, but I did not stop to make inquiries. I just made for the door."

"Did he try to stop you?" I asked.

"No; I must say that he did not. He tried to dissuade me from going, but he made no attempt to interfere with me. In fact, I must say that he behaved very well."

"Very well!" I exclaimed, "after decoying you down with a bogus telegram!"

"Well, you see," she said, in obvious attempt at extenuation, "I really do think that he is very fond of me."

Oh, incomprehensible female, I thought: what are you aiming for? And aloud I said:

"Well, it seems to me about as dirty a trick as I ever heard of, and, if you will allow me, I should like to put the matter in the hands of my solicitor."

"Oh! I don't want any scandal," she cried, "and I don't think I want to do anything to harm Herbert."

"And you are still ready to marry him?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she said simply.

I asked if she had any letters, to which she replied that she had not. All Mr. Mansfield's protestations of love had been made verbally. His written communications had always been of the very briefest. She agreed, however, to my putting the matter in my solicitor's hands, so long as nothing got into the papers.

Accordingly, next morning I called on my lawyer—an extremely sharp and capable man—and gave him the facts. He undertook to set some inquiries on foot with regard to Mr. Herbert Mansfield and also with regard to Miss Kitty Goring, whom he was inclined to regard with a professionally suspicious eye.

"You look out, my young friend," he said as I was leaving, "or else we shall have you requiring my professional services before long. What do you want to go meddling with other people's affairs for?"

I explained that the situation interested me and that the honour of the Cab-drivers' Association demanded that the matter should be thoroughly sifted. He muttered some reply in which I thought that I detected the word "fool" once or twice, and so I took my leave.

A week later he wrote asking me to call. His inquiries, he told me, had resulted in the discovery that Mr. Herbert Mansfield was a very rich man, which I had rather suspected from one or two remarks which Miss Goring had let drop. He had, however, made an even more interesting discovery, which was that Miss Helen Mansfield had sailed for Italy a week before the arrival of the famous telegram. To his obvious regret, he had been able to learn nothing to the detriment of Miss Goring.

"As far as I can learn, she appears to be respectable," he admitted reluctantly. "Now then, I have drafted this letter for your approval, which perhaps you will kindly read."

The letter, as far as I can remember, after so long an interval of time, was very much to this effect:

"DEAR SIR,

"I am instructed by my client Miss Goring to institute proceedings against you for breach of promise of marriage, and should be obliged if you would furnish me with the name of your solicitor, with whom I can communicate in the matter. I may add that we are in full possession of the fact that Miss Helen Mansfield sailed for Italy a week before the despatch of the telegram purporting to come from her, by means of which my client was induced to pay a visit to your house at Richmond on the night of the 18th inst. We are also in a position to produce the cab-driver who conveyed you and Miss Goring down to Richmond and who is prepared to come forward and testify as to my client's shrieks for assistance and her precipitate flight from your house as soon as she learned of the deception which had been practised upon her.

" Yours faithfully,
" E. & O."

I read this letter and remarked that there had been no shrieks.

" Never mind," he said, " it will frighten him, which is what we mainly want."

Apparently Mr. Mansfield was thoroughly frightened, for his reply to my lawyer's letter contained a cheque for £250, which he hoped that Miss Goring would accept as some slight compensation for the fright and inconvenience to which she had been put by the unfortunate fact that his sister's telegram had, by the forgetfulness of a servant, been despatched a week after she had written it.

Miss Goring accepted the cheque and there was no more talk of any action for breach of promise. Three months later, however, I received an invitation to the wedding of Mr. Herbert Mansfield and Miss Kitty Goring, accompanied by a letter from the prospective bride announcing that Miss Helen Mansfield had died in Italy shortly after her arrival there, and that there was therefore no further obstacle to her marriage to "dear Herbert." She hoped I would come to the wedding. I did not go, as a matter of fact, for I had no doubt in my own mind that "dear Herbert" was an unmitigated cad and I had no particular wish to meet him. During the following summer, however, I received an invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Mansfield to a garden party at . . . House, Richmond, which I did accept. I found Mrs. Mansfield prettier than ever and playing the hostess with wonderful ease and grace. Mr. Mansfield professed himself delighted to see me and gave me a cordial welcome as a former friend of his wife's. I did not enlighten him as to the peculiar circumstances under which that friendship had arisen, nor did I think it necessary to inform him that there had been no need for me to inquire my way to his house, as I had already driven him down there a year before. He was not of the sort to invite confidences. He was fat and common and I wondered more than ever how such a charming girl as Kitty Goring could have married so obvious a bounder. However, the ways of the fair are inscrutable.

CHAPTER XIV

PRESS PRICKINGS

All those whose digestions call for the slow consumption of eggs and bacon during the breakfast hour, will, with unanimous voice, agree that the Press with the big " P " is one of the worthiest institutions with which civilisation has endowed us. It sheds its gentle radiance over the whole breakfast-table and does much to dispel the feeling of gloom which rises in even the most sanguine breast at the sight of the pile of oblong envelopes that rises ominously in the shadow of the toast-rack.

The man, therefore, who does not bless his morning paper is a churl and a curmudgeon and everything else unpleasant that begins with " C." At the same time, it is not to be denied that there are few who have entered upon the last lap of life's course—or, shall we say the last lap but one—who have not, at one time or another, suffered in some part from the misdirected exuberance of Press enthusiasts anxious to contribute spicy tit-bits to the pages of the particular paper under whose banner they serve.

My own troubles in this direction began at the early age of sixteen and were in connection with a certain equestrian tragedy which took place in the Phœnix Park, Dublin, during my father's second term of office as Lord Lieutenant. That was all long before the days of big head-lines, but, if big head-lines had then been in vogue, the article in question, which, it is not to be denied, wounded me in my tenderest parts, would probably have been headed :—" Lord Lieutenant's youngest son weeps at the death of his favourite pony "; for this was the gist of the article in the *Irish Times* which described in touching terms how I had been found in the Phœnix Park, lying on the ground and weeping by the side of my dying pony. I think it was the word pony that mainly excited my adolescent fury. I was sixteen and, for more than a year, had been in the habit of riding, in turn, almost all of the numerous grown-up-man-carrying hacks which the Viceregal stables sheltered. I did not even possess a pony. The stables could not have produced a pony if they had been paid for it; and, as a matter of fact, the animal by the side of which I was stretched out weeping (was I weeping? Well, perhaps, a little) was a sixteen-hand thoroughbred mare about as far removed from the " pony " ranks as Mazeppa herself. " Pony," indeed !

However, let me to my tale of woe which—as will be seen—has certain features in common with the story of Blue-beard and Fatima.

I have said that I had ridden *almost* all of the many hacks in the Viceregal Lodge stables, but there was one which I had never ridden and which I most earnestly desired to ride. This was a beautiful thoroughbred chestnut mare named Lilian, who belied her gentle name by one or two most unladylike propensities, of which the most pronounced, perhaps, and certainly the most inconvenient, was a disposition to run away with every man to whom she was introduced. So very marked was this propensity that—with the exception of one or two horsemen of wide celebrity, such as " Cat " Richardson, Bay Middleton and Marcus Beresford—all my father's guests resolutely declined to make any closer acquaintance with Lilian than was permitted by a respectful inspection from the gangway at the back of her stall.

For this reason, and because of much debate over the subject of her wickedness, Lilian became in time an object of spell-bound romance to me, and sorely did my youthful soul yearn to make that closer acquaintance with the chestnut mare which my father's guests so ungallantly shunned. The obstacles, however, in the way of my realising my dream were almost insurmountable.

The routine for the daily riding-parade at the Viceregal Lodge was as follows: Towards the end of luncheon, the A.D.C.-in-waiting would make enquiry as to who was going to ride and as to what particular horse would be required for each rider. The names, when given, were taken down by him on a slip of paper, *e. g.*:—

Marlborough for His Excellency,
Garry Owen for Lord Ernest,
Edgeware for Captain Beresford,

and so on. The A.D.C.-in-waiting then went to the A.D.C.'s room, which was situated at the end of a long wing of the building and to which was attached a permanent Orderly. The Orderly was handed the slip of paper, which he took round to the stables and, at the stated hour, the horses came round to the front door; but among such horses—for reasons already given—the redoubtable Lilian never figured. Several times, at luncheon, when the A.D.C. was making out his list, I mildly suggested that Lilian would be the better for a little exercise, and offered myself as her pilot, but my suggestion was always "pooh-poohed" as something too preposterous for serious consideration. Still, my ambition burned steadily within me, and every successive rebuff only increased my ardour. Then, at last, came my opportunity.

There was a big function of one sort or another at Naas and my father, accompanied by several officials and by two A.D.C.'s, including the A.D.C.-in-waiting, went off to sleep at some neighbouring country-house from which the scene of the function was easily accessible. It was very rarely that such a thing happened, for although there were, of course, occasional functions to be attended in more or less distant parts of the country, still, when this was the case, the whole family, as a rule, migrated to the scene of action and the Viceregal Lodge was, for the time being, deserted. But here was my father—who rode regularly every day—and the A.D.C.-in-waiting both absent for a couple of days, thereby, as it seemed to me, opening, or, at any rate, leaving the key of, the door behind which I had so greatly longed to explore. The opportunity, I instantly resolved, was not to be neglected, as it might never occur again. I accordingly mapped out my plan of campaign and cleared my decks for action.

Luncheon that day passed off much as usual and, towards its close, I casually announced my intention of riding. That was nothing. I rode practically every day and neither my mother nor my unmarried sister had the slightest inkling of my sinister design. The moment luncheon was over I wrote on a slip of paper: "Lilian for Lord Ernest at three," and strolled nonchalantly down to the A.D.C.'s room, where I handed the slip to the Orderly in attendance. Then I went to dress. As soon as I was conventionally attired in breeches and boots I strolled down, with as effective an air of unconcern as I could command, to the separate little entrance which opens from the Orderly Room attached to the A.D.C.'s quarters. I argued that, by selecting this route, I should run less risk of meeting tiresome, inquisitive people whose interference might yet have the effect of frustrating all my well-laid plans. No such misfortune however overtook me. When I reached my little side-entrance, there was the formidable Lilian being led up and down in orthodox fashion by a groom and showing no signs of wickedness in her unemotional demeanour. I mounted, adjusted my stirrups and, feeling extraordinarily pleased with myself, set out at a foot's pace for the Phœnix Lodge entrance, which lies little more than a quarter of a mile from the Viceregal Lodge. All went well till we had covered about half that distance and then—without the slightest note of warning—Lilian bolted with me. It was all done so quickly that, before I knew where I was, I found myself clattering madly down the road towards the Phœnix Park. I quickly realised that I was absolutely incapable of stopping the mad beast between my legs, so I gave up tugging at her and devoted all my energies to the task of steering. I never for a moment lost my head and I instantly resolved on my line of action. All I had to do, I reflected, was to steer the beast for the Fifteen Acres and then—once on that interminable plain—the game was in my hands.

My plan, although quickly formed, was not quite so easy of accomplishment as it is on paper. Few plans are. I clattered like John Gilpin through the entrance lodge, past the Phœnix Monument, across the Castlenock road and past the entrance to the Chief Secretary's Lodge. So far it was all more or less plain sailing. Now, however, came the tug of war. To get on to the Fifteen Acres I had to pull my run-away a full point round to the left, thus avoiding the wall and sunk fence of the

Chief Secretary's Lodge, but I was then faced with two hundred yards of very uneven ground thickly planted with trees. The stems of these trees were not more than ten feet apart and of course in no sort of regular formation, so that the openings through which I had to steer were at times very much narrower. However, I managed to get safely through, with both knees intact, and emerged on the other side into the Fifteen Acres with my heart swelling with the foretaste of victory.

Now the Fifteen Acres, as everyone knows, is a vast plain of many hundred acres. Why it is named the Fifteen Acres no living man can explain except on the grounds that it is in Ireland. It is so large that it could easily satisfy the ambitions of the most determined run-away that ever took the bit between its teeth, and I made up my implacable mind that it should now satisfy Lilian.

I had unfortunately either read in some book, or heard someone who was supposed to know, lay down the doctrine that the best cure for a run-away was to keep it running away till it was so sick of running away that the very thought of running away would, for ever after, inspire it with feelings of nausea. Here, I thought, was my opportunity of permanently curing this too-impetuous Lilian of her inconvenient and guest-scaring habits. I would keep her going, I thought, till she realised the error of her ways and swore on the Stud Book never so to offend again. There was no difficulty whatever about carrying out my plan. By the time we had reached the end of the Fifteen Acres it was a very tired and penitent Lilian that I had under me. However, she had to have her lesson and so I swung her round, still galloping, and started her on the homeward course. It had now become a case of kicking her along, but my idea was to give her such a lesson as would stick in her memory for ever; and so I took no notice whatever of the very strong suggestions which she began to throw out that it was time to stop. It was just about the Powder Magazine that she fell. The ground was very hard and slippery and she probably first slithered a bit and then crossed her legs. In any event she came down and remained down for ever, for one of her fore-legs was broken just above the fetlock.

No words can describe or give any idea of the feeling of anguish and bitter remorse that then was mine. I was absolutely stunned by the appalling magnitude of the calamity which had overtaken us and for which I now realised that I was solely responsible. I lay on the ground beside Lilian and whispered to her that, when I had kicked her along, I never for one moment dreamed that such a thing as this would or could happen. I had no idea that she was so terribly distressed or that I was driving her to her death. I felt like a murderer, as indeed I was, though not in intention. I stroked her neck and asked her pardon and, perhaps, I wept; anyhow the papers said I did, and to all this Lilian made no sort of reply but lay quite flat on her side nibbling very ineffectually at the short, parched blades of grass. Presently red-jacketed boys from the Hibernian School on the far side of the Fifteen Acres began to dribble upon the scene, attracted by the unusual sight, and gathered round Lilian and me in open-mouthed, awe-struck groups. I heeded them not one whit. The whole tragedy was between Lilian and me, and to the rest of the world I gave not even a passing thought.

I think we lay there an hour or, possibly, two. Time was nothing; it did not count. My only desire on earth was to make Lilian understand that

I had not meant it, and then, if possible, to die. I suppose some of the Hibernian School boys must have gone up to the Viceregal Lodge and reported the catastrophe for, eventually, a dog-cart appeared, driven by a groom and carrying, as a passenger, the family doctor. Upon their arrival, the saddle and bridle were taken off the mare and put into the dog-cart; I was dragged up, almost by force, from my position on the ground and made to sit beside the doctor, who drove me home. The groom remained with the mare. Shortly afterwards, men came out with spades and a rifle, and they shot and buried her where she fell.

To me, the tragedy was almost too dreadful to be borne. I had two causes for remorse. In the first place I looked upon myself as the murderer of the unfortunate mare and in the second place there was the question of my father. I had taken advantage of his absence to ride a forbidden horse for which he had—as I knew—paid 150 guineas; and I had killed it. It was a very bad offence.

That same night my father came back. I was quite unable to face him and went to bed in misery. However, a boy cannot spend the whole of his school holidays in bed and next day I had to be up and about. I need not have had any misgivings with regard to my father. He never so much as once approached the subject of the chestnut mare, directly or indirectly, from the night of his return, after the tragedy, till the day he died. Nor did his generosity end there. Within a week of the date of the terrible occurrence in the Phœnix Park I was persuaded by my mother and sister to ride again. They felt, and I felt with them, that to hold off any longer would appear affected and foolish; so, very shamefacedly, I once more joined the afternoon parties of riders in the Phœnix Park.

My father was always the pioneer of these little riding parties, for he had the idea that his horse pulled less if he was in front; and I noticed that, after my return to the saddle, he always led us very wide of a new patch of yellow earth that broke through the grass in the neighbourhood of the Powder Magazine. I valued this splendid consideration for my feelings even more than I valued his magnificent silence, for the very thought of my " murder "—as I held it to be—was unspeakably painful to me, and, for many a day after, I could in truth say with Whyte Melville or with a very slight alteration of Whyte Melville's words :—

" There's a place I never pass
In the sedges and the grass,
But for very shame I turn my head aside,
While the tears come thick and hot
And my curse is on the spot,
'Tis the place where the young mare died."

With such a complex tragedy gnawing at my vitals, it may be easily understood that it was no common wave of fury that surged over me when I found myself reported in the *Irish Times* as having been found weeping at the death of my " favourite pony " ! There are certain dignities to be preserved, even in the field of tragedy.

Looking back along the undulating track of varied experience, I have little doubt in my own mind that poor Lilian's sole trouble lay in too strong a bit. Grooms attached to stables which are not hunting stables are as a rule hopelessly stupid and ignorant as to the management of horses. The probability is that, with a plain snaffle in her mouth, she would have gone like a lamb, instead of which I have not the slightest doubt that they had bridled her with some barbarous bit, with an exaggerated length of cheek and an exaggerated height of port, and the more she fought and raged against these barbarities, the more they would tighten up the curb, till in the end she became unrideable.

In after life I never came across a well-bred horse that I could not ride in a snaffle. The more they pulled, the easier was the bit which I put in their mouths, and almost always with success; in fact, as far as my memory serves me, always with success. One horse that I bought with a terrific reputation for pulling I used to ride in a plain snaffle covered with leather and with round leather discs guarding the " cheeks." In this—the mildest bit that any horse could wear—he never pulled more than was comfortable and proved a real good horse to me. I believe people are more sensible now about using snaffles, but in the days of which I write there was a strong prejudice against them and a corresponding tendency towards powerful double bridles which were supposed to compel a horse's neck into a handsome curve.

Eight years had passed since the tragedy of Lilian's death when, once again, circumstances arose over which the Press-pen of cruel calumny was destined to wound me to the very core, and, once again, it was in the field of horse and rider that this occurred.

This time however it must be owned that there was no actual misrepresentation of facts; only what the lawyers would call a determined *suggestio falsi* owing to the brutal baldness of the Press-reporter's phrasing.

My regiment was, at the time, quartered in Leeds, which lies in a district abounding in worthy, tall-chimneyed institutions engaged in furnishing us with many of the necessaries of life; but it is not a district which lends itself happily to steeplechasing.

It was necessary, however, to hold our annual regimental meeting somewhere and, as the Leeds district was hopeless, we had to look further afield for ground suitable for our purpose and at length decided on Wetherby as the best available site within reasonable distance of Leeds.

It must in the first instance be explained that the Wetherby course was what was known (and no doubt still is known) as a " natural " course, that is to say that the fences were not short, isolated obstacles specially grown and built up for the purpose of steeplechasing. They were, on the contrary, natural hunting fences, a certain length of which was trimmed, levelled and strengthened, where necessary, for the purposes of our meeting. It is important to bear this in mind in view of the calamitous occurrence about to be described.

I began the day well by winning the Maiden Hunters' Race on a little bay horse that I did not greatly fancy, and whose peculiarities I have already made mention of in the chapter devoted to adventures at Kensington Barracks. My particular ambition, however, was to win the Regimental Cup on a horse of mine named Paisley, which I did very greatly fancy. The description of this race in the Yorkshire Post ran as follows :—

" Lord Ernest Hamilton's horse Paisley appeared to have the race in hand, but, after clearing the water-jump in fine style the second time round, his owner and rider was unable to retain his seat in the saddle and the horse completed the course alone."

In order to enable the indulgent reader properly to appreciate my frame of mind as my eyes lit on these words of scorn and contumely, it becomes necessary to give to the eager world the details of the race as they actually occurred and not as they occurred in the poetic imagination of the reporter.

The Regimental Cup was a three mile race, which meant that we had to make nearly two complete circuits of the course. There was a good field of starters, but of these many were quickly discomfited by the stiffness of the course and, by the time we had passed the stand for the first time, there were only three left in the race. A brother-officer, whom I will call X, was leading by about 80 yards, I lay second with the comfortable consciousness in my mind that, before the winning post was reached, our respective positions would be reversed; and about a hundred yards behind me came Z, hopelessly out of the race. In this order we approached the water-jump for the second time.

Now, for a clear understanding of what followed, it must be explained that the water-jump at Wetherby that year was not a fair fence, by reason of the fact that the distance between the flags was little more than half what it ought to have been and, incidentally, little more than half what it was in the case of all the other fences. Why the committee of management had scamped this fence so disgracefully I am not in a position to say; probably because more labour was entailed in digging out the actual water part of the jump than in merely levelling and regularising the other fences. Anyhow it was narrower than any steeplechase fence I have ever seen. At the very outside, four horses could have taken it abreast and that would have been a squeeze. Down then on this water-jump of most insufficient width we bore in the order named. X fell on landing and, instead of getting out of the way of the horses following as anyone but a lunatic would have done in the circumstances, he started to explain to the little crowd of spectators at the fence why it was that he had fallen, or how it was that he had fallen, or, anyhow, something which he had no business to be thinking about at the moment. The effect of this impromptu and quite idiotic explanatory lecture on the part of X was that, across the entire width of the fence, there stretched first the horse, broadside on, then about six feet of extended reins and finally X himself gesticulating wildly to the crowd. I shouted at him as I came down at the fence to get out of the way, but so absorbed was he in his own affairs that he either did not hear or did not heed and, in any event, did not make the slightest move in the direction of clearing the course. In the circumstances I did exactly what anyone else would have done in the same position—I jumped the fence where the second line of obstruction appeared thinnest, that is to say where the extended reins connected X and his horse. Not till I was in mid-air did X tumble to the fact that there were other people besides himself to whom the race was a matter of interest. As soon as he did manage to realise this, he jumped back to save himself from being knocked over, and his horse, at the same time and for much the same reason, threw up his head and backed. The result of these combined movements was that the released reins hooked themselves round my right foot, dragged that foot and leg over my horse's tail and flung me with terrific force on to the ground. Luckily both stirrup leathers came out, as I always rode with the bars down, as indeed everybody does who is not insane. If they had not come out, there is little doubt that I should have shared the experience of poor Ravaillac and should have been, literally, torn in two by wild horses.

For some minutes after I had gained my feet, I was absolutely voiceless, partly no doubt from the violence of the shock but mainly owing to the homicidal reflections which chased one another rapidly through my burning brain. I had trained the horse myself; I had backed him for—for me—quite a considerable stake and I had the race absolutely in my pocket but for the not-to-be-politely-spoken-of behaviour of X. As it was, Z went on alone and won the race.

Ah! but, the wise ones will say, you ought to have been in front and then this catastrophe would not have been possible. The answer is that I could not have been in front. X's horse had got away with him and had made the running throughout the race at far too great a pace to be sustained for three miles, and it was, in fact, mainly because his horse was beat that he came down at the water-jump. Also I may add that I lay as much as a hundred yards behind the leader because I had foreseen the possibility that he might fall and I knew that, if he fell at the water-jump, I should need to be some way behind in order to steer clear of the débris. After the water-jump was passed, I had no fears of any such thing happening and my intention had been, as soon as that serrated obstacle was passed, to have overhauled the leader without further delay. We were still about a mile from home. It was, I think, the very fact that I had laid my plans so carefully and had guarded against all and every eventuality that made my discomfiture so bitter.

And then, on the top of all this, to have the public told that I should have won if I had been able to retain my seat in the saddle! Well, so I should, but how to retain one's seat in the saddle after having been lassoed by the reins of a stationary horse is a problem beyond my powers of solution. Something had got to go. In justice to that particular myrmidon of the Press, I must admit that the water-jump at Wetherby was practically out of sight of the Grand Stand, where it is to be supposed that the reporter had taken up his station.

A good many years had rolled by before I was once more the victim of the imaginative flights of a Pressman's fancy. This time the slur cast was on my moral rather than my sporting reputation and therefore by so much the more nefarious. It was on the occasion of my first visit to America. I made the crossing in the old *Lucania* in company with my two friends Mr. and Mrs. Haggard. The six days on the Atlantic were singularly uneventful and the voyage can only be described as a very dull one. In due course we arrived at New York and while I was waiting on the Wharf until such time as the Custom House officials were at liberty to turn my baggage inside out, I was accosted by a cheery and conversational reporter, who opened negotiations by enquiring if this was my first visit to the United States. On my replying that it was, he proceeded to enquire anxiously as to my first impressions of New York City. I explained that my horizon being unfortunately limited by the walls of the wooden shed dedicated to the inspection of baggage I had no impressions; to which he replied, "Well, that's too bad," but, quickly recovering himself, pressed his attack from a new quarter.

"Well, now, Lord Hamilton," he said, "whom would you describe as the most interesting passenger on board your ship?"

I passed my late fellow-passengers in rapid review before my mind, but without being able to detach any single one as standing conspicuously out from the grey mediocrity of the remainder, and so I told my breezy friend.

"Then I may take it that you had a dull

crossing?" he said; to which I assented without hesitation.

"But surely now, Lord Hamilton," he pursued, "there must have been someone on board who stood out from the rest. Think now."

I did think, but without success and—being weary of the inquisition—I was looking about me in exasperation for some loophole of escape from my persecutor when my eye lit on a seething cluster of young men in the centre of which, but on a slightly lower plane, a bright blue velvet toque was just discernible. An inspiration flashed across me. I knew that the blue toque rested on the glossy curls of a young lady of the theatrical profession who had been one of our fellow-passengers on the *Lucania.* She and her interminable variety of costumes had been a source of perpetual amusement to the Haggards and myself. On each day of the voyage she had appeared in at least four different costumes, each of which was more elaborate and, if possible, more grotesquely ill-suited to the Mid-Atlantic Ocean than its predecessor. On the morning of our arrival in New York waters she had crowned herself with a bright Prussian-blue velvet toque under the restricted shade of which she had flitted about from one young man to another like some brilliant humming-bird sipping honey from a well-stocked garden.

Here was clearly the very passenger of whom my persistent news-culler was in search. Why had it not occurred to me before? I turned to him with a feeling of pleased relief in my mind.

"I think," I remarked, "that if you were to burrow your way into the centre of that crowd of young men over there, you would probably find there the object of which you appear to be in search."

"How's that?" he asked.

"Well," I said, "all those young men were passengers on the *Lucania* and the lady in the middle was also one of our passengers. It is hardly necessary to ask who—in their estimation—was our most interesting passenger."

"And I may take it, Sir, that you concur in their verdict?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I said, wishing to be rid of him at any price. He thanked me and hurried off in the direction of the blue toque.

From New York I journeyed to Vancouver, and from Vancouver to Alaska, and it was a couple of months or so before I was back again in New York. At the Manhattan Hotel, where I was staying, I found a large mail awaiting me and, among my letters from England was one calling on me for an immediate explanation of the cutting from the New York paper which was enclosed. I unfolded the cutting and my startled eyes were arrested by the following amazing announcement in the big, bold, black type in which American newspapers make their most poignant announcements:

LORD ERNEST HAMILTON TAKES KEEN INTEREST IN PRETTY YOUNG ACTRESS.

Below followed half a column, which began by describing the colour of my hair and my teeth and then devoted some ten lines to my vast estates in Arizona which I had come over to inspect in person. The paragraph concluded by telling the world that I would have found the tedium of the six days' sail across the Atlantic unendurable had it not been for the fortunate presence on board of Miss Birdie Papillon, who had proved a source of ceaseless and absorbing interest to me.

Fortunately I was in a position to bring forward two witnesses in the shape of Mr. and Mrs. Haggard, who were able to swear with hands uplifted, that I had not so much as exchanged one single remark with Miss Birdie Papillon during the entire crossing, which was literally true. But, except for their presence on board, it is not improbable that the zeal of my friend the reporter would have made acceptable explanations extremely difficult.

CHAPTER XV

GLAMIS CASTLE

MACBETH, according to George Buchanan, the sixteenth century historian, was the eighty-fifth King of Scotland, and exercised his peculiarly murderous talents about A.D. 1060. That he was Thane of Glamis we know, but he was also Thane of Cawdor, and the latter Castle disputes with Glamis the honour of having been the scene of Duncan's murder. In neither case does the claim rest on very substantial grounds, for it is very doubtful whether, in Macbeth's day, Scotland could boast any castles approaching to either Glamis or Cawdor in grandeur or architectural excellence. Altogether apart, however, from any such semi-legendary claims and their sentimental value, Glamis, as it stands, is a thing of joy to the untutored eyes of the casual visitor no less than it is to the spectacled optics of the archæologist. Both are confronted—the first probably with rather more distinctness than the second—with a massive, towering Keep, bristling with odd little pepper-box excrescences, dotted about here and there, without any attempt at regularity; two flanking wings, one of which wanders away into a long stretch of offices and outbuildings; the whole of pink stone, pitted and bleached with the wind and weather of many centuries.

Such is Glamis Castle, the oldest, the most picturesque and the most discussed private residence in the United Kingdom. The antiquity of the central part is immense—so great in fact that it stretches back beyond all records and loses itself in a haze of mystery and legend. Whether Macbeth ever pillowed his royal head there, whether King Malcolm actually died there, and left the mark of his blood on the floor, as is seriously claimed, does not seem to matter much. The evidence of the Castle's stupendous age lies chiefly in itself—in its formation, in the stones of which it is built and in the pre-mediæval thickness of its walls. It is these walls which have kept the old pile standing through all the rolling centuries and it is these walls which are responsible, in the main, for all the legends and tales of mystery that surround the Castle; for in their thickness there is room for a concealed house of cubic dimensions not greatly inferior to those which the Keep now exposes to the eye. Some of the concealed stairways and bye-ways are still accessible. What thrills of tremulous joy were mine when, as a boy, I lowered myself through a trap-door in the floor of the Blue Room dressing-room and—candle in hand—wound my excited way down a little corkscrew stone stairway which eventually ended in nothing—I believe in the thickness of the drawing-room wall.

The old twelve-foot walls are full of such little stairways and passages—many of them known to the present generation; many others, no doubt, unknown. People used to talk much of a supposed secret room at Glamis. Why, there are probably a score of secret rooms, or more, blocked up perhaps centuries ago and hidden away for ever (until the Castle crumbles to ruins) in those vast mysterious walls. It would be odd indeed if eerie tales did not circle tumultuously round such a house.

Fifty years ago Glamis Castle and its supposed mystery were the favourite dinner-table topics of Society. At that date the Castle sheltered a family of ten children, in every stage of adolescent growth, and the main interests of its lord and of its chatelaine lay in the nursery and in the schoolroom. Train services were by no means so good as they are to-day and the remote castle in far-off Forfarshire was, to the great majority of people, no more than a fascinating name round which hung all sorts of delightfully weird and ghostly tales. Mrs. Oliphant wrote a story about it in *Blackwood's Magazine*, in which Lord Strathmore's identity was thinly disguised under the title of Lord Gowrie. The story strayed as far from legendary tradition as it did from truth and gave a certain amount of offence. The outside public, however, gulped it down. Anyone who had actually been to Glamis and had slept there, and come away with hair which was not whitened and eyes which were not seared by the grim visions on which the Castle was reputed to regale its visitors, was a sort of hero.

I paid the first of many delightful visits to Glamis as a boy—a privilege which I owed to a school-boy friendship with some of the Lyon boys—and, for years after, the slightest allusion to my visit in drawing-room or dining-room would instantly surround me with a bevy of gaping, palpitating open-mouthed maidens who eyed me with a sort of reverential awe which was quite gratifying to my youthful vanity. " Had I seen the ghost ? " " Did Lord Strathmore wear a terrified, hunted look ? " " Was it true that none of the family ever smiled except on Tuesdays ? " etc., etc. It was, I cannot deny, with a certain feeling of regret that I was forced to deprive these poor maidens of all these pleasing fantasies. Nothing would have given me greater pleasure or have increased my own momentary importance more than to have confirmed these grim tales. But the spirit of truth in which I had been reared at the point of the birch-rod compelled me to admit that Lord Strathmore was about as cheery and genial a host as anyone could find throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles and that the family enjoyed an irrepressible exuberance of spirits (not in the spook sense) that kept the old Castle in a ceaseless whirl of noise and merriment from breakfast-time till bed-time. As for Lady Strathmore, it was about as impossible to associate grim melancholy with her beautifully smiling graciousness and goodwill to all men as it would be to associate twenty degrees of frost with a bed of Maréchal Niel roses.

It was in truth a house of joy and brightness beyond most others. All the members of the Lyon family, without exception, were markedly musical; all had considerable acting abilities and took joy in exercising them, so that, throughout the long winter evenings and nights, the ancient twelve-foot walls and the ancient spooks immured therein were made glad with the sound of music and song, or with noisy rehearsals for private theatricals, which were also always of a musical character. So large a family, all so musically endowed, is seldom found and to happy visitors at Glamis, their peculiar gifts afforded a ceaseless delight. The youngest daughter of the house was, and still is, pre-eminently the best amateur violinist in the kingdom and her playing alone was by itself enough to keep any music-lover enthralled, but it was in part-singing that, as a family, the Lyons chiefly excelled and chiefly delighted. At any moment they would suddenly start, just as the spirit moved them, on some madrigal or sextet—during dinner, out walking in the park, sitting round the fire in the billiard-room, or driving to the station in the family omnibus—it didn't matter where; one note was given—with a tuning-fork, or otherwise—and off they started. Their voices, being all made according to one pattern as it were, blended most delightfully and the effect was fascinating beyond belief. I have never known anything quite like it. With the whole family so musically and histrionically inclined, it is hardly to be wondered at that, the moment I arrived at Glamis, on the occasion of my first visit, I was at once seized upon by the family and allotted a part in a musical extravaganza which they were rehearsing and in which a part had been reserved for me. The extremely clever words of the extravaganza had been written by Lord Strathmore himself and suitable established tunes had been adapted to the words.

We rehearsed for a fortnight or so—hard—and then gave our performance to the *élite* of Forfarshire, on a stage rigged up by the house-carpenters at one end of the drawing-room. It was voted a great success, but, as is generally the case in such performances, I imagine that the performers got more enjoyment out of it than anyone else.

Did I see any ghosts? Alas! No, I did not. I should have disliked it most acutely at the time if I had, but I should greatly have enjoyed the afterglory of relating my experiences to a thrilled and pale-faced audience. But, as I say, it was not my good fortune to meet any of the officially certificated ghosts attached to the place, nor, to tell the honest, prosaic and most unpopular truth, has it ever been the good fortune of anyone else listening to the strokes of midnight's eerie chimes at Glamis to see one of its famous but astonishingly shy spectres. I slept in the Room on the stairs; I slept in the Man-in-armour's Room; I slept in King Malcolm's

Room with his blood-stains still showing on the floor and I slept in the Room at the top of the stairs. Each of these rooms has attached to it a tame ghost of its own who—by the rules of the establishment—is not allowed to groan or rattle chains in the preserves of any of his neighbours; but none of these unsociable spirits showed even a passing interest in me. I never slept in the Blue Room, which is reserved as the special hunting-ground of Old Beardie, the paramount chief, so to speak, of all the Glamis ghosts, but I have little doubt that my experience would have remained the same, even if I had. I spent many hours of a most cold and uncomfortable night in the Hanged-man's Room with my brother Freddie. This room is situated very near the summit of the Keep and is famous for the fact that the last man who slept there, several centuries ago, was found in the morning hanged from the cross-bar of the ancient, musty four-post bed which still offers its hospitality to anyone wishing to follow in his footsteps. As this room, not unnaturally, enjoyed a very sinister reputation, my brother and I, both boys at the time, determined to spend the night there or, at any rate, a good part of the night. I took with me, as a sort of barometer of ghostly pressure, a small fox-terier of mine who was at that time my constant companion. It must be confessed that our nocturnal vigil was a most dismal failure. We were very cold, and very bored. The dog alternately went to sleep and sniffed round the wainscot for mice. Its tail throughout was disappointingly erect, from which one can only infer that the malignant spirit attached to that particular room must have been away on a holiday at the time.

So much for the ghosts who sleep in. Outside, in the cold Northern blast, The Grey Lady occasionally paces the lawns and gravel paths and expresses her discontent with fate in the peculiar language of ghosts. She is not allowed inside the Castle, which may of course be the ground of her complaint. I was not favoured with a glimpse of this dissatisfied lady, in which respect there is good reason to believe that I was not more unfortunate than others.

It may possibly be gathered from the above brief review of the credentials of Glamis Castle's best-authenticated ghosts that—although a good ghost-story thrills me to the core—I have not the slightest belief in the basis on which it is built up. Ghosts, in the sense of *objects* which present themselves to the view, have no existence outside of the fictional thrillers which I love so well. Anything seen—and there is no doubt that phantasms have at times been seen—is subjective, which means, in other words, that the shape or appearance is created by the brain of the person who sees it. A hypnotised person can be made to see anything that the operator suggests and, similarly, it is not to be doubted that certain extraordinary (in the literal sense) influences working on the brain can produce phantasms or images of persons who are not present.

I made a practice at one time of attending spiritualist séances. I went in an open and inquiring frame of mind and with no particular purpose except that of investigating a side of life with which I was so far unacquainted. As far as I can remember I continued my investigations for about two years and then dropped them in disgust. There was no advance. We were no nearer anything definite and established at the end of the two years than we were at the beginning.

The " circle " which I attended was composed of distinguished men and women who were obviously sincere in their belief, and there is no doubt that the owner of the house where the séances took place was thoroughly convinced of the *bona fides* of the medium who conducted operations. Greatly would I have liked to have shared his belief, but I was not able; my critical faculties were too acutely alert.

During the séances of this particular circle, the procedure was always the same. We sat in a ring, in a very dim red light, holding hands and singing hymns till the manifestations began. The hymn-singing was simply intended as a refutation of the suggestions made by enemies that the spirits who appeared were vassals of Satan. It was recognised by all that such could not possibly face the strains of "Lead, kindly light" without grave discomfort. After a decent interval of suspense, we were generally favoured by a visit from the spirit of Grimaldi, a defunct clown of some antiquity and—judging by his humorous efforts during the séance—of very inferior wit. Grimaldi's habit was to crack bad jokes in a squeaky voice from the region of the floor, which, after a time, led me to the conclusion that this irrepressible clown, even though invisible, retained the practice in the after-life of standing on his head. Although jocular and sprightly, this visitor to our circle always remained invisible. For some obscure reason he was never able to materialise like our other two regular visitors.

I may say that Grimaldi's habit of addressing us from the carpet puzzled me for a time, but not for long. What puzzled me far more than the strange position of his head was the nature of his remarks. A spirit cracking bad jokes! The very idea revolted me. Do we carry our fleshly attributes with us beyond the grave? Do the comic remain comic, and the surly remain surly? Are we confronted in a future state with the need to crack bad jokes? Perish the thought! It is indeed unthinkable. Here, in the course of our short pilgrimage from Gamp to undertaker, we crack jokes in a sort of hysterical attempt to dissipate or, at any rate, relieve the gloom inspired by the "change and decay which in all around we see." Our jokes are simply a rebound from the pavement of depression. They are, in almost every case, based on calamity. But that, in the sublimated state to which we have every reason to believe that we are soaring, we should not have risen beyond the cracking of stale earthy jokes is so dreadful a thought that I cannot even momentarily face it.

Grimaldi's opening "turn," then, always left me coldly disgusted. He was invariably succeeded by a Pathan, who had evidently mastered the art of materialisation better than poor Grimaldi, for he would walk boldly about among us, exhibiting for inspection his bearded and turbaned head, by means of a phosphorescent slate, which he conveniently carried for the purpose—presumably in a materialised and sufficiently muscular hand. This expert spirit had managed to materialise not only a bearded and turbaned head and a muscular hand but also a larynx of quite exceptional power, with which in a voice of thunder he would pour forth a flood of strange inarticulate sounds. It was unfortunate in the extreme that none of us could understand what this well-meaning and conversational spirit was saying. Quite a number of retired Indian officers were sought out for purposes of interpretation and brought to attend our séances, but with disappointing results. One told me that he was acquainted with several Pathan dialects but that, although he seemed to recognise a word here and there, the spirit's remarks, as a whole, were quite unintelligible to him. So, sad to relate, we never learned what the poor fellow was saying to us in such hearty and indeed threatening tones.

The Pathan was invariably followed by a Nun, known as Sister Amy. I may here say that, during these glimpses of mine into the spirit world, I was very greatly impressed by the strict etiquette observed by those whom we succeeded in calling back. Never once did the Pathan interrupt Grimaldi's squeaky jokes, and never once did the Nun cut in prematurely on the Pathan's impassioned but unintelligible harangues. Everything was orderly and regular and the etiquette as strict as at Buckingham Palace.

Sister Amy, in marked contrast to the noisy Pathan, was a soft-voiced spirit who whispered consolatory messages in our ears, generally " from a beautiful lady who is praying for you." Like the Pathan, she generously carried a phosphorescent slate in her hand, with which she would occasionally condescend to reveal her refined features. She spoke good honest English, but, like all séance spirits that have honoured any circle at which I sat, she exhibited an ignorance with regard to all matters of interest either present or future which almost amounted to imbecility. She knew nothing, she could tell us nothing. Barry Pain, that brilliant but all too unprolific writer, who can make us laugh or weep or shudder at will, explains the imbecility of séance spirits by the theory that, as man's intellectual capacity declines as he approaches the grave, so does it continue to decline beyond the grave, with the result that by the time the spirit reaches our select circle he or she has, in the majority of cases, become absolutely " gaga."

A remarkable and, to me, suspicious circumstance in connection with the materialisation of the spirits of those who have left us is that they invariably find it necessary to wear some kind of head-covering; never by any chance are their locks exposed to view. Whether it is that, in addition to being "gaga," they also go bald after their departure from this world, and dislike the idea of exposing their shiny craniums to the view of their old associates on earth, I cannot say, but certain it is that such spirits as—with the aid of a phosphorescent slate—have offered their features to me for inspection, have invariably had their hair concealed. Either the spirit is that of a Pathan with a turban, or that of a Nun with a coif. If it be that of a departed friend, who was neither Pathan nor Nun, then the hair is covered, in the case of a female spirit, with gauzy draperies or, in the case of a male spirit, with a knotted towel.

At an entirely different circle from the one I have been describing, but one which I occasionally attended, I was asked, during the course of one séance, if I wished to see any particular spirit. I named a young friend of mine who had been lately killed in the Boer War. In this case we sat holding hands round a large circular table, in marked contrast to my regular circle, where the centre of the ring was hollow. Within a very short time of my request a white shadowy head and shoulders appeared above the table facing me. The features were quite distinct, as far as the dim phosphorescent light which the figure apparently exuded—for there was no slate in this case—permitted me to distinguish them. I cannot deny that, at the time, I fancied I detected a strong resemblance to my dead friend. I said: "Is that you, ——?" and the figure nodded. I should have been greatly impressed but for one circumstance. The apparition had a towel knotted round the top of its head. The more I ruminated on this peculiarity, the more it puzzled me. If my poor young friend came all the way back from the spirit world in order to show himself to me, why did he think it necessary to tie a towel round his head before doing so? I could find no explanation. But if the whole thing was fraud and trickery, I could find an immediate explanation of why the figure confronting me on the table should have a towel round its head. There is nothing so distinctive as hair—nothing which so definitely fixes the identity of anyone. Features in a very dim and mysterious phosphorescent light which blurs the outlines may easily deceive the anxious enquirer, but not so the hair. Everyone's hair has a character of its own; and if one's curly-headed friend appeared in the spirit with straight hair, or one's straight-haired friend with curly hair, or one's partially-bald friend with a tremendous mop of hair on his head, the deception would, of course, be at once apparent.

At this same séance musical instruments used to fly about the room, which was a very small one, in the most delightful abandon. How this was done I cannot say, nor how the apparitions were produced in the middle of a table round which we sat in an unbroken hand-holding ring. In this particular circle the medium sat with the rest of us round the table, and so had each of his hands, of course, in the grasp of a neighbour throughout the proceedings. Unless these neighbours were accomplices, it is difficult to see how he did the trick.

On the occasion of my next visit to this circle the medium announced that there was present a spirit of a certain name, which he gave, and he asked if anyone present had known such a person. I replied that I had and shortly afterwards a white, filmy, indistinct column appeared in the middle of the table. It had no distinct form and no features. The medium apologised, on behalf of the spirit, for the partial failure of its first attempt at materialisation, but predicted better results in the future, if perseverance was maintained on both sides. On my side, at any rate, it was not maintained, so that I am not in a position to furnish any report as to the progress made by that particular spirit in the art of materialisation.

One of the chief mysteries of the spirit world which I was never able to solve, or even to have solved for me, was with regard to their clothes. Why should a spirit require any clothing? Mortals have to wear clothes in order to avoid pneumonia and also, as some wag once put it, in order to prevent horses from shying at the sight of them; but surely no such necessity can exist in the case of spirits! Another problem arises in sympathy. The theoretical explanation of the materialisation of a spirit is, in itself, not unreasonable. The spirit borrows the necessary amount of matter from the unconscious body of the medium, who, it is claimed, loses weight in exact proportion to the amount of matter which he, or she, lends. This is all a more or less reasonable thesis. But from what source do the spirits' clothes obtain the matter with which they materialise? Do the medium's trousers lose weight as well as his body? And if the spirit can draw on inorganic matter for the supplies necessary for materialisation, where is the need for a medium at all? The spirit could surely get all the matter it requires from the curtains and carpet.

It is all unsatisfactory and most unconvincing. While a regular attendant at the first of the two circles to whose respective spirit-raising methods I have referred, I begged all the other regular sitters to agree to suddenly switch on a strong actinic light while the Pathan was delivering his accustomed, and slightly tedious, speech. The suggestion met with universal opposition. I was told that it would be a dreadful insult to the spirit! that the actinic light would dissolve it and cause it much pain—as far as I could understand, both physical and mental. Never again, I was told, would a spirit which had been so scurvily treated gladden the ears of the circle with his stentorian tones. The thing was not to be thought of. However I pressed my proposal. What matter, I argued, if the good spirit was a little offended? Even if the gloomy forebodings of the elect proved true, the gain in knowledge would be incalculable. Twelve comparatively sane people would have been witnesses, in a full glare of light, of the gradual fading into nothingness of a brawny, loud-voiced, talkative Pathan. The experience would be invaluable. All scepticism with regard to the *bona fides* of returning spirits would be crushed for ever out of existence. The possible communication of mankind with very concrete spirits of another world, who gradually melted away before their eyes under the application of white light, would be established beyond any shadow of doubt.

However none of my arguments had the slightest effect. My proposal was rejected with horror by all my fellow-investigators and, as I had by that time begun to weary a little of the Pathan's eloquent but unilluminating speeches and of Sister Amy's whispered inanities, I decided to resign my membership of that hidebound and unenterprising circle. I did so, however, with the practical certainty in my mind that, had the white light been suddenly switched on to our eager and palpitating circle, it would not have afforded us the satisfaction of seeing the burly Pathan melt away before our eyes into thin air, but would, on the contrary, have discovered the worthy medium standing in our midst, disguised with beard and turban. Had the white light been switched on during Sister Amy's pathetic " turn," the result would have been the same, except that, in this case, the turban and beard would have been replaced by a white coif. So firmly convinced of this had I gradually become and so weary was I of singing " Lead, kindly light " to the frivolous spirit of Grimaldi, and of listening to the vapid and unprogressive remarks of the other two visitors from beyond, that, seeing no prospect of any advance in knowledge, I withdrew permanently from the field of psychical research.

One or two incidents there were, however, during my two years of attendance which, it must be admitted, puzzled me, and which still puzzle me. On one occasion a distinguished singer brought her equally distinguished father, a General in the American Army, with her. When the customary preparations had been made, the medium withdrew, as usual, into the curtained cupboardy retreat which closed the open end of the circle and where he was in the habit of sinking into stertorous trances. After we had sat in passive expectation for some twenty minutes, during which we had, as usual, given a very passable rendering of " Lead, kindly light," but without, as usual, wooing the coy Grimaldi from the depths of space, the medium suddenly emerged from his box and, in his natural voice, announced that he was unable to obtain any results that night, as there was a hostile influence present which had the effect of cutting, so to speak, his communications with the spirit world. While we were all in some wonderment as to his meaning, the American General suddenly sprang to his feet and, in a maniacal voice, proceeded to consign the entire assembly to perdition. “There are seven devils here present,” he roared, “but I am stronger than them all, and I will fight them, fight them, fight them!”

Still vociferating and shouting his declaration of war, he was led out by his daughter, leaving in the minds of such of us as remained a feeling of nervous speculation as to which of us were included in the diabolical seven.

When order was once more restored and we had closed up our reduced circle, the medium expressed his regret at the interruption and even more regret at the fact that the gentleman who had just left the room would shortly destroy himself. This, as a matter of fact, did actually happen, and though such a prediction obviously did not call for any very startling powers of prophecy, the whole incident was curious, and not easily explained.

The fundamental idea at the back of spiritualism, and at the back of the manifestations which take place at its séances, is not such as to satisfy man’s natural craving for immortality; nor, as far as can be judged, is it intended to reach so far. It is primarily aimed at affording comfort to those who have recently lost near and dear relatives, and who are ready to sacrifice their higher ideals of futurity for the sake of immediate communion with those they have lost. One feels for the aching hearts that are ready to stretch credulity to its utmost limits in this quest, but can any of us really hope that conditions beyond the grave are such as séance-goers would have us believe? Can we honestly wish that those who have gone before us, or that we too, when we go, should be condemned to drift aimlessly about this little planet (which after all is only one out of many millions) at the beck and call of any little circle of suburban inquirers? The very idea seems to me to be too miserably petty and parochial. If there is a comprehensive cosmic scheme in which we are all involved—as one cannot but believe—surely our destinies must lie in fields somewhat more sublimated than the precincts of Wanstead or Beckenham.

CHAPTER XVI

WILTON

It may be said by any recorder of past impressions, with a clear conscience and with no straining after flattery, that, in the days of Sidney Herbert, fourteenth Earl of Pembroke, there was no more delightful country-house in England—from the guests' point of view—than Wilton. I have little doubt that to present-day visitors it is equally delightful now, under the reign of Reggie Herbert, fifteenth Earl, and possibly it was no less so in the days of the Elizabethan, Jacobean, Georgian, and Early-Victorian Earls of Pembroke, whose portraits still smile hospitably down on visitors from the walls of Wilton House; but I speak of the days when I knew it best, when Sidney Herbert and my niece reigned at Wilton and added, by their wide and genial hospitality, to the happiness of many lives. It always seemed to me, during my visits to that favoured spot, that those two managed to bring the art of hospitality to a higher pitch of perfection than any other host or hostess whose bread and salt I have partaken of. In what special form of magic the art lay I cannot attempt to define, for words have little descriptive value in such matters. Perhaps it was because neither of them ever played the conspicuous host or hostess in the ordinary sense. They always seemed to be members of the party rather than the givers of it. My niece had started with the advantage of having been thoroughly schooled in the art of making people happy long before she reigned at Wilton, for, after my sister's death at Lambton, she started at a very early age to play the part of hostess to her father's many guests, to say nothing of twelve critical and outspoken brothers and sisters—some older, some younger—but all equally exacting and clamorous. It was, without doubt, in great part owing to her special training in those far-off Durham fields that she acquired in so remarkable a degree the art of making everyone feel happy and at home. "At home" is really the right phrase to use in speaking of the general atmosphere at Wilton for, from the moment of his arrival up to the sad moment of his departure, every guest was made to feel as though the place were his own or, at any rate, as though he were temporarily a member of the family rather than a stranger within the gates. The house, grounds, stables and park were all his to do what he liked with, within the limits of civil usage. As a consequence, everyone who visited Wilton was happy. I think Sidney Pembroke's extraordinarily lovable personality must have infected everyone in the house more or less, and driven the submerged devil that is in all of us out of man-guest and woman-guest alike. It was impossible to be cantankerous or ill-natured with that delightful face scintillating kindness and goodwill on all alike—on the unjust as well as on the just. A lady, who was on a visit to Wilton at the same time as myself, once said to me:

"Wilton House is full of beautiful things, but, to my mind, the most beautiful thing in it is Lord Pembroke himself."

She was not far wrong. He was a pleasure to look upon and a pleasure to be in any sort of association with. From the old Parliamentary days, when he was known as the best-looking man in the House of Commons and as the most popular Whip that ever stopped a hungry member from going out to dinner, till the day of his death, it is to be doubted whether any living being ever harboured even a transient ill-feeling against Sidney Herbert. It would have been very, very difficult to do so.

Next to Sidney himself, the most beautiful thing at Wilton was, and is, the Double Cube—probably the most beautiful room in the kingdom, with its perfect proportions and perfect decoration, and with its giant Van Dyck filling one end of the room from door to wall and its other priceless treasures in the way of pictures and furniture.

My own visits to Wilton were always in the winter months for the shooting. The big house-parties in the summer for cricket were for a younger generation. The covert-shooting in the days of which I speak was so remarkable as to merit a little song of praise all to itself because, at the moment of writing, it seems doubtful whether such shooting will ever again delight the hearts of those to whom the high, swift and frequent pheasant is a thing of joy. The buff envelopes *On His Majesty's Service* will see to that. So, as a tribute to the blythe and careless days when those things were possible, I turn up the old records of my game-book.

I find that, in December, 1899, I went to Wilton for three days' shooting. The three days realised respectively 1236 head, 1142 head and 2276 head. By some piece of happy good fortune for myself, one of the guns, who was expected for the following week's shooting, wrote while I was there to say that he was prevented by illness from coming, and I was asked to stay on and fill his place, which, it need scarcely be said, I most joyfully agreed to.

On this occasion the three days' shooting realised 557 head, 1586 head and 1392 head. These bags were no more than normal. The last time I ever shot at Wilton was in 1911 and then I only shot two days, but those two days realised respectively 1679 and 2213 head.

In covert-shooting mere numbers by themselves mean nothing; in fact, mere numbers—unless distinguished by the proper accompaniment of height and speed—bring affliction rather than joy to the heart of the true sportsman. Low birds, of course, have to be shot, because they are placed before one for that purpose by one's host, but the shooting of such is a duty, not a pleasure. It would, perhaps, be an exaggeration to say that, at Wilton, there was never a low bird, but it is certainly true to say that the great majority of birds were high and, in some cases, very high indeed. That this was so was due in part to the hilly nature of the ground over which the birds were driven, but mainly to the exuberant genius of McKellar, the head-keeper, who, in the art of bringing birds high over the guns, may truly be said to have stood alone in his profession. McKellar, in fact, could make birds fly at any height he chose.

During the winter which followed on the death of the thirteenth Lord Pembroke, the Wilton shooting was let for the season to a syndicate of ambitious sportsmen determined to equal, if not to surpass, the achievements of former shooting-parties, as recorded in the game-book. Before the first rise of the first day, McKellar went up to the spokesman of the syndicate and, in his own quiet, courteous way, asked if the guns would like the birds brought to them high, medium or low. "Oh, high, of course," was the unanimous reply.

McKellar smiled to himself, and walked away. After a certain interval, the birds came as the guns had elected that they should come, with the result that, though there was a prodigious expenditure of cartridges, there was next to nothing on the ground in response. Thenceforward the members of the syndicate—after a short and gloomy conference—decided in favour of " medium " birds for the rest of the day, and did better.

McKellar was the only keeper I have ever come across who took a positive delight in bringing birds so high as to beat the guns. On one occasion—when a very famous shot formed one of the party—I noticed that McKellar wore a particularly happy smile on his broad, genial face.

" What is it that you're chuckling over ? " I asked him.

" Well," he replied, " Lord X missed the first four birds that came over him at the first stand. They were too high even for him."

With this short-lived triumph, however, McKellar had to rest content that day, for I can answer for it that Lord X missed very few indeed during the remainder of the day, or, indeed, during the remainder of the visit.

To miss the first two or three birds at the first rise of such a place as Haddon Wood may be excused to any man, no matter how great may be his habitual skill. In those days the guns always went to the meet in an open brake drawn by four horses which were driven by the eldest daughter of the house, for the Pembrokes were among those who, for many years, stubbornly set their faces against the twentieth-century innovation of motor-cars. Emerging very cold from the confines of this airy vehicle after a five-mile drive, the guns were at once drawn up in line along the bottom of the chilly, sunless valley to which the brake had brought them. There was no opportunity for anything in the nature of a brisk walk wherewith to get up the circulation. Straight to your allotted post behind the ash-wand that bore your number was the order of the day, and there you had to await events. So, on a particular day in December, there we stand in a long line, fifty yards or so apart, and face the steep wooded hill about one hundred and fifty yards distant, from which the attack is presently to be expected; and there we stand for half an hour or so, stamping our feet on the frozen ground and slapping our chests like up-all-night cabmen; but, for all these exercises, growing colder and colder as every minute passes. Then, suddenly, without any warning, and quite silently because of its height, a pheasant appears sailing across the valley and looking very small indeed. He is not quite out of shot, but as near out of shot as a bird may be and yet fall to the gun. The ordeal for the particular gun over whom that bird elects to fly is a trying one, for he is within full sight of all the other guns and he knows that every eye is on him. Moreover, he labours under certain grave disadvantages, for his shoulder muscles are stiff and his fingers are numbed with the cold and very great accuracy indeed has to be exercised if the bird is to be brought down as a bird should be brought down—without any flutter or extension of its flight.

A dozen or so of these sky-scraping pioneers would generally come over the line with varying fates, before the shooting began in earnest, and after that, everyone was too busily occupied in trying to intercept as many birds as possible out of the masses that streamed overhead to take much notice of what his neighbours were doing. To the best of my recollection, there were never more than six or at the most seven rises during a day's shooting at Wilton, even when two thousand pheasants were shot. The guns were almost invariably posted in one long line along the bottom of a valley with woods on both sides.

One of the most remarkable features of McKellar's wonderful organisation was that one hardly ever saw or heard a beater and very rarely saw or heard a bird get up. They simply came, sailing silently at you over the tops of the trees. As to how it was done I have not the least idea, for the manœuvres of the C.-in-C. and his army were hidden from us further down the valley; but I have no hesitation in saying that, as an artistic performance, it beat anything I have ever seen in the covert-shooting line.

The big rise on the Warren day has special features of its own. The birds, for this rise, are driven along a wood which crowns a spur, jutting out into the wilds, away from home and food. They have no option but to come back across the broad, open glade that separates them from the trees on which they love to roost and under which they love to pick up the succulent grains of maize and wheat which are there scattered for their benefit. Along this glade the expectant guns are lined, fully resolved to frustrate to the best of their ability the birds' intentions to return.

On one occasion, to my astonishment and slight trepidation, I found myself posted in the place of honour, at the lower end of this line of guns. Here it was the custom of the good citizens of Salisbury to congregate in formidable numbers to watch with critical eyes the prowess of the gun at the bottom.

They were accustomed to the brilliant exhibitions furnished by such faultless marksmen as Lord de Grey or Mr. Harry Stonor and I pictured them, in imagination, pelting me—if not with rotten eggs—at least with the vocabulary of blighting scorn as soon as they began to realise how they had been cheated of their expectations. So, for half an hour I waited, in ever-growing trepidation, while the birds were being slowly driven farther and farther away from us. Suddenly a bird appeared in the distance—some two hundred yards away—making back for his home, the pioneer of many hundreds that were to follow. I saw at once that he must pass straight over my head and wished with all my heart that his selected line had been elsewhere. At sight of the intervening crowd, the bird rose and rose. At the psychological moment I raised my gun, went through the customary motions and, with no great certainty of success, pulled the trigger. To my unspeakable relief the bird crumpled up tidily, and fell in correct ball-like fashion. Almost before I had changed my gun, I became aware of two more birds bearing down on me flying even higher than the first, for the gun-shot had warned them of danger below. Both of these, I am pleased to say, collapsed satisfactorily and after that I had no more fears. My tail, so to speak, went up with a jerk and I muttered to myself, "Let them all come."

I acquitted myself creditably at that stand, although doubtless falling far short of the standard to which the Salisburians were accustomed; but, knowing my peculiar temperament as I do, I am fully conscious that, if I had bungled those first three birds I should, in all probability, have made a grievous exhibition of myself with those that followed and should have been written down in the records of Salisbury as a sad blot on the hitherto unblemished escutcheon of the great Warren rise.

Sidney Pembroke himself was as neat a shot as any in England, but, with his invariable unselfishness, he always effaced himself so completely during the Wilton shoots that it was rarely that one saw him fire a shot.

CHAPTER XVII

THE HUN IN HUNLAND

WHILE we as a nation are still under the shadow of a tragic and, in many cases, a heart-searing war; while our wounds are still open and the memory of dreadful deeds still stiffens our jaws and tightens the grip upon our sticks, the subject of the Hun in his pleasanter aspects is one which has to be approached softly and with circumspection. We cannot, in the short time that has elapsed since the Peace of Versailles, forget many deeds which had best be forgotten and which, when remembered, fill us very full of most un-Christian thoughts. And yet—immeasurable as was the wickedness of these deeds, and impossible as it is wholly to wipe out their memory—we like to think, or to try to think, in our more generous moments, that they were the work of men specially singled out for their brutality, and that they are not characteristic of the German nation as a whole. We know in fact, in support of that belief, that the cinema representation of the *Lusitania* sinking was—to the Government's unbounded astonishment—received with the very strongest marks of disapproval by the German audiences to whom it was shown. We know too that the German Government was hard put to it to fill the vacancies among their U-boat Commanders on account of the specially damnable qualities required for that service, and such knowledge helps us a little towards a more charitable mood. On the other hand we have all met, and many of us have suffered from, the bullying, blustering blonde beast so unpleasantly associated with some of the earlier incidents of the war. He is not a lovable beast and, for brutality in its most blatant and naked form, can be bracketed with the U-boat Commanders; but there are reasons and very valid reasons for believing that these beasts were not natural products of the country, but were artificially manufactured for the special purposes of the war. They are also, it must be admitted, a product by no means peculiar to Germany; they are to be found, with certain modifications, in every country in the world and they are generally as sincerely disliked by their own countrymen as they are by foreigners. Well, there is good and bad in all of us, and whether it is the good or the bad in me which makes it difficult for me to nurse a national hatred against those whom I have found so very unhateable in my personal relations, I cannot say. I merely speak of things as I have found them.

I may say at starting that the branching paths of my life have not led me to any great extent into the hidden recesses of the Fatherland, but, in every case where they have done so, those paths are lined with kind and friendly shades. And so to my tale.

A good many years ago, but still well within the present century, I was deputed to visit a little place in Westphalia named Bestwick for the purpose of making inquiries as to the possibility of smelting some British Columbian ores there. Incredible as it may appear, it was actually cheaper in those days to ship certain ores from British Columbia to Germany, rather than to send them for smelting purposes across the frontier into the United States. The smelting-works about five miles from Bestwick, to which my inquiries were directed, had patented a certain process which appeared particularly suited to the ores in question, and, as already stated, I was sent over there to inspect the process and judge of its results on the spot.

I knew no German; not a word. I could repeat the poem of the Lorelei by heart, for I had been forced at school to commit that classic to memory, but, as may be easily understood, I found it had very little value as a means of procuring railway tickets or eggs and bacon. However, undeterred, though not entirely undismayed, by the knowledge that my destination was very many miles off the beaten tourist track, I set out on my journey and eventually arrived at Bestwick, which I found to be a little country village buried away in the Westphalian hills and never before in its uneventful history, I believe, visited by an Englander. At least so I was given to understand.

The season was mid-winter and the weather as villainous as it is possible for weather to be. The ground was thickly covered with melting snow, and a yellow haze, suggestive of a thin London fog, veiled the hilly and otherwise, no doubt, picturesque landscape. Visibility, as the pundits say, was very bad and conditions were generally depressing when, in the late evening, the crawling, often-stopping train pulled up with a grunt at the little wayside station of Bestwick. As I stepped on to the platform, valise in hand—for I was travelling very light—my eye lit happily upon a small boy wearing a gold-laced cap on which was inscribed the friendly word " Hotel." I beckoned him up and handed him my valise, and together we trudged across the road, through the snow, to an uninviting-looking wooden shack-house which faced the station. My boy-guide threw open the door and we stepped straight from the road—without any stepping-stone in the way of office or vestibule—into a long bare room or hall in which were assembled some fifty young men. As I entered, after kicking the snow off my boots, every face was turned towards me, not rudely but with inquiring interest, and the buzz of general conversation died down to a dead silence. After a slightly awkward pause—for the conditions were unusual and I was handicapped by my ignorance of the language—a stoutish elderly man disengaged himself from the crowd and came towards me with the half obsequious, half enquiring manner which stamps the hotel-landlord in all climes. I saluted him and tried him with the two magic words "bed" and "dinner," both of which he was quick to understand, as became a good, business-like landlord. He seized my bag and led me upstairs to a bedroom where I unpacked and made my ablutions while—as I earnestly hoped—my dinner was being prepared down below.

In about a quarter of an hour's time, having removed the superficial stains of travel, I descended and found my place laid at the far end of the long trestle table which ran almost from end to end of the hall. I sat down and refreshed myself with the plain but sufficient fare set before me, while the mass of young men politely crowded to the far end of the room and there indulged in low-voiced conversation. It was clear to me from the first that the room I sat in was the only guest-room which the inn could boast, and that my unexpected arrival had interfered with some kind of a function or celebration, for it was beyond all reason to suppose that mere chance had brought fifty young men together at this out-of-the-way little Bestwick Inn. While I was eating, I noticed that the young men, with great delicacy of feeling, kept their backs turned to me, and hardly seemed to be aware of my presence. Not till I had eaten my last mouthful of sauerkraut and had pulled out my pipe did they take the slightest notice of me. Then, with smiling and very friendly faces, they began edging up the room towards where I sat in solitary state. The first overtures made were not successful. I had by means of well-recognised movements of the head to convey the information that my German education had been in some part neglected and that the guttural blandishments of the Fatherland fell meaninglessly on my ears. Upon this there followed a certain whispered and voluble debate among the young men, as the result of which one of their number was pushed forward in my direction and opened a friendly attack in the French tongue. Here at least I was at home and—all diffidence having been overcome by the discovery that his French was worse than mine—I entered freely upon a friendly exchange of questions and answers. He opened the attack by asking what I—an obvious foreigner—was doing in mid-winter in such a God-forsaken spot as Bestwick and, when I had enlightened him on this point, I in return asked him to explain for my information why fifty apparently sane young men had gathered together in this out-of-the-way inn in remarkably snowy and inclement weather and with no apparent object in view. In reply he told me that they were all students from a college some eight miles distant and that they had all bicycled in through the snow to do honour to the landlord's daughter, whose birthday it was. In one second I found myself transported into the region of romance. Here was I actually participating in one of those stirring student episodes of which I had read so much in poetry and song. When I further learned that the name of the landlord's daughter was Lisbeth, I could hardly believe that I was not dreaming, and my mind sped back across the years to the old German student songs which had formed so conspicuous a part of our school repertoire at Harrow.

> " There came three students from over the Rhine—
> To a certain good hostel they turned them for wine.
> ' Ho ! Landlady have you strong wine and beer ?
> How fareth the fräulein your daughter dear ? ' "

Even in that song the landlady's daughter was named Lisbeth, and I found it hard to persuade myself that I was not actually taking part in the romance which the song commemorated. This curious impression was destined very shortly to be much strengthened, for, while I was reviewing the situation and trying to persuade myself that this was a real scene and not a mere creation of the imagination, my French-speaking friend asked me politely whether I—as a stranger—would have any objection to the fräulein coming into the hall and joining the party. It is hardly necessary to record my answer and, after a short interval, an exceedingly pretty girl came smiling into the room, was formally introduced to the Herr Englander and demurely took her seat at my side on one of the rough wooden forms that ran the length of the table.

The evening which followed was one that I shall never forget. Till past midnight we sat round that rough clothless table, drinking countless glasses of light beer and smoking excellent penny cigars and singing choruses. The students were immensely delighted and flattered to find that, thanks to the Harrow song-book—since purged of all these Hun songs—I knew quite a number of their student melodies. Many of them, such as " Wanderlied " and " Up, my brothers," have few rivals as rousing, soul-stirring choruses, and, encouraged by the excellence of the landlord's beer and the singularity of the situation, I fairly let myself go in these choruses, undeterred by the fact that my contribution to the words was in a foreign tongue. As midnight approached, so exhilarated was I by the familiar music and by the strange experience through which I was passing, sitting as I was in a shabby wooden hall with fifty foreign students, not one of whom even knew my name, and of whose language I knew not one word or at any rate very few words, that I stood up and, waving my empty beer-glass on high, sang the first verse of Wanderlied as a solo in English.

"Ho ! drain the bright wine-cup,
  Ho ! drink with good cheer,
For the hour of our parting,
  My loved ones, draws near.
Farewell to the mountains,
  Farewell to my home,
My heart in the far world
  Is yearning to roam."

Then came the deafening chorus :

"Uvi-waldera, uvi-waldera
Uvi-walder-alder-alder-a."

I got a vociferous encore, but I was quite unable to remember the words of the remaining verses, and it fell to the lot of one of the students to complete the rest of the song in German. Then we sang the Lorelei, the Thuringian Volkslied, the Mill, and "Wenn ich ein vöglein wär," to all of which dear old John Farmer's coaching at Harrow enabled me to contribute the tenor part. It was a great evening !

At the hour of midnight the fair Lisbeth withdrew, blushing and smiling, after making a little speech in which she thanked the students for the honour they had done her in coming, and shortly afterwards the students themselves took a cordial farewell of me and, lighting their bicycle-lamps, set out on their eight mile ride through the snow-slush.

Now throughout this—to me—most interesting episode, there were two things that struck me with peculiar force: firstly, the great politeness and cordiality of the students towards myself, a complete and unknown stranger and, secondly, the wonderful courtliness and decorum of their conduct throughout towards the landlady's daughter. I have, as already stated, no knowledge of German, but I am none the less perfectly certain that, throughout the entire course of that evening's proceedings, there was not one word said which should not have been said. Would, I found myself wondering, students in England or in France have behaved quite so nicely as those German youths did? Would they, in the first place, have bicycled, in such strong force, eight miles through the snow, to pay honour to an innkeeper's daughter? And, in the second place, would they, when there and after draining many, many glasses of beer, have behaved in quite the same chivalrous manner towards a very pretty girl isolated in their midst? Perhaps they would, but nevertheless the conduct and bearing of those students made a lasting impression on me. How many of them, I wonder, are now alive? Oh, yes, Huns all, of course; but still . . .

The second half of that night was not quite so pleasant as the first had been, for I passed the greater part of it in trying, with only partial success, to induce the huge satin-covered feather-bed, which is the German substitute for blankets, to poise itself on my own shivering person instead of on the floor. Why is it that the Germans will persist in this most uncomfortable custom?

On the occasion of my next visit to Germany I went over to Hamburg for the purpose of buying from Mr. Hagenbeck some Mongolian pheasants in the breeding of which I was at the time greatly interested. The town of Hamburg was a revelation to me. The name has somehow an ugly commercial ring about it, but the place itself is truly beautiful, built as it is round a large inland lake covered with little white-sailed boats.

The menagerie, circus and zoological gardens of the Hagenbecks, father and son, are situated some two or three miles outside the town and, as my business lay in that direction, it was only natural that the greater part of my time should be spent there instead of in the town itself. I did not regret my visit. The grounds surrounding the menagerie were intensely interesting and most cleverly designed. To the nervously-inclined, however, the first introduction to the gardens is likely to come as something of a shock, for, as the visitor strolls nonchalantly along the flower-bordered paths, he may, on rounding a corner, become aware of a small party of lions approaching him from the opposite direction, licking their lips with that stealthy tongue-action which we have always been given to understand indicates a good appetite. The illusion is perfect, for, to the eye, there does not appear to intervene so much as a foot of rabbit-netting between the lions and their breakfast, should it please them to view you in that capacity. As a matter of fact there is a deep and unjumpable chasm separating *Leo Africanus* from *Homo vulgaris*, but so cunningly is the ground contrived that to the eye it appears (as is of course intended) that there is no dividing fence and that lions and human lambs are all frolicking about in the same enclosure.

The lion-paddocks were certainly a triumph of constructive art, but, at that time, the object of Mr. Hagenbeck's chief pride and glory was a miniature Matterhorn which reared its wooden pinnacles to the sky in the middle of the garden. It was, I believe, entirely constructed out of wood, but it had the exact appearance of a huge jagged outcrop of rock, and there was not the slightest doubt that it completely deceived the little ibex and chamois, who bounded about upon its wooden precipices in the evident belief that they were in the Alps.

The Zoo boasted, at that time, two magnificent specimens of the first cross between lion and tiger. These were the most beautiful beasts I have ever seen and a source of unbounded pride to Mr. Hagenbeck, but, being hybrids, there was of course no possibility of perpetuating the variety.

I made two expeditions to Hamburg in search of Mongolians and, on the occasion of my second visit, I found both the Hagenbecks in considerable distress over the fact that their favourite python had proved unable to retain his dinner. The python leads a dull existence but a cheap one, for he only dines about three times a year, but he then likes to make a hearty meal. The Hagenbecks' python, after ruminating sleepily for some months, had at length expressed a desire for dinner, and in response was given a large, fat antelope which had conveniently died in the menagerie the day before. I was taken to see the antelope. The python had squeezed it into the shape of an enormous sausage, the antelope's long straight horns lying flat down its back, where they had been imbedded in the flesh by the pressure. The circumference of the antelope was about ten times that of the python, and to the eye of the observer it seemed ludicrous to suppose that the snake's jaws could possibly expand sufficiently to engulf that vast, repulsive-looking sausage. Still, the Hagenbecks assured me that he had twice got it down, but that on each occasion he had felt compelled to return it. The python now lay on the floor of its cage, glaring sulkily and reproachfully at its elusive dinner. He was, as afterwards transpired, merely gathering strength for a third attack.

I was immensely interested to learn from Mr. Hagenbeck that he never, by any chance, fed his pythons on live animals. In our London Zoo it was for many years, and may for all I know to the contrary still be, the custom to feed the pythons with live animals, the argument in favour of this barbarous custom being that pythons would not eat dead animals. This belief—like so many others that bolster up brutal customs—was evidently the result of gross stupidity and ignorance, for it is perfectly clear that, if one institution can feed its pythons on dead animals, another can do so equally well.

I took leave with many expressions of goodwill of the two Hagenbecks, father and son, and on the following day returned to England. The day after my arrival I received the following telegram: "You will be glad to learn that, at the third attempt, poor Hector has swallowed his dinner." Hector was the python.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BORDER COUNTRY

"Oh ! the broom and the bonnie, bonnie broom
  And the broom of the Cowdenknowes,
And aye sae sweet as the lassie sang
  I' the bought milking the ewes."

So runs the opening verse of one of the oldest of the Border ballads, and I have quoted it because it always seems to me typical, and pre-eminently typical, of the atmosphere which surrounds all these ballads. In the three volumes in which they are generally found bound, the Border ballads are divided into three sections, legendary, historical and romantic. The legendary series is the least interesting, for the simple reason that the ballads composing it are legendary, but the other two are so closely interwoven that I have never been able to understand why the necessity arose for breaking them apart into distinctive groups. Romance enters largely into almost all the historical ballads, and history—in the sense of geographical history—is the very essence of all the romantic ones.

I suppose few people except those to whom the Border Country means something more than a mere name have ever read these old ballads, collected, edited and published by Sir Walter Scott; and yet they are well worth reading even by those to whom the hills and dales of the Border Country are still untrodden pastures. For those to whom these hills and dales are pleasantly familiar the Border ballads cannot fail to have an absorbing fascination, for they spin a web of historical romance round nearly all of the present-day farmsteads which rear their grey roofs by the rushing waters of Roxburghshire, Selkirk, and Dumfriesshire. In these three counties lies the Border Country of ballad and romance and it is a country which holds a man for ever in its grip if the glamour of its hills and dales and of its stirring history of old, so freely commemorated in the ballads, once falls upon him.

For one thing, it is to be doubted whether there is any other country district in the kingdom which can boast so detailed and so intimate a knowledge of the doings of its inhabitants three hundred years ago and more. Every ruined Peel has an exciting and—in some cases—a sanguinary legend connected with it. One may say even more than this. Every farmhouse of note along the Scottish side of the Border can be pretty accurately repopulated with the rough moss-troopers who occupied each and all of them in the good old raiding days of Queen Elizabeth. We know not only the names of these sturdy—if somewhat ill-behaved—moss-troopers of three hundred and fifty years ago, but the names of their sons and their daughters and their relationship by marriage to one another. Nowhere else in the kingdom is such a reconstitution of the agricultural population of three centuries ago possible, but it is possible in the Border Country for reasons not wholly unconnected with the predatory practices of the residents. For when any farm had been raided and harried and bereft of all its live-stock (which happened pretty often) the aggrieved tenant, who knew perfectly well who his aggressors were, laid formal and querulous complaint against them in the Warden's Courts. As practically every farm within reach of a party of riders from across the

Border was raided at least once a year, we get, in the records of the Warden's Courts, which are still extant, a fairly accurate register of all the farm residents on both sides of the March, as well as a very fair estimate of their capacity for pillage and free trading generally.

Here, for instance, are two extracts from the register of the Warden's Courts, taken at random, which will give an excellent idea of their value for purposes of repopulating the farms with their old tenants :

July 1581. James Foster of Symwhaite complains upon Will Elliot of the Redheugh, Adam Armstrong of the Shaws, Archie Armstrong of the Hill and John Elliot of Heughouse for 50 kine and oxen and all his insight.

Sept. 1587. Andrew Routledge of the Nook complains upon the Laird's Jock, Dickie of Dryhope and Lancie Armstrong of Whisgills and their complices for fifty kine and oxen, burning his house, corn and insight £100 sterling.

There are scores and scores of these complaints, some of them so exact in their definitions that, after a time, we really begin to feel that we have an intimate personal knowledge of all the reprehensible characters who figure in them so persistently.

The physical features of the country in which these everlasting raids and counter-raids appear to have constituted the chief recreation of the inhabitants are as peculiar to it as were the habits of those whom the country reared. It is a nursery of mountains and yet it has—strictly speaking—no mountains, for all its countless eminences are " hills," even when, like the Great Queensberry, they rise to close on 3000 feet above the sea. And the word " hills " really seems to fit them best, for they are as distinct in character from the mountains of the Highlands as the South Downs are from the glaciers of Norway. These hills, rising in endless profusion, are shepherded into groups by the sparsely-populated dales—Nithsdale, Annandale, Eskdale, Ewesdale, Liddesdale and Teviotdale—which are in truth the rearing-grounds of the distinctive clans, or, at any rate, were so in old days; and the clustering hills are the ramparts dividing each from each. The fascination of the country, however, and its peculiar character, come from the uninhabited hills and not from the occasionally inhabited dales. These round-topped Border hills bear to one another a remarkable family likeness and so thickly do they, at times, press upon one another that the clear, tumbling burns which separate them are pinched into strangely precipitous ravines, of the hidden existence of which there is no warning in the smoothness of the contours which present their faces to the main valleys or dales.

Very little less fascinating than the myriad round-topped hills of the Border Country are the people who live between them, out of sight, down by the clear-running waters. They are a race by themselves, as distinct from the Lowland Scots as they are from the Highlanders and combining the good qualities of both. Centuries of a strenuous, precarious life, brimful of adventure and punctuated by periodical fights either with the English Borderers or with traditionally hostile clans on their own side of the March, have produced a strong, self-reliant race, a dozen or so of whom it would be good for any man to have at his back in a tight place. It is not too much to say that, if anyone is seeking a man to whom he may entrust his life, his purse, his cheque-book, his collection of foreign stamps, anything, in fact, except his whisky-flask, he could not do better than commence his search among the sturdy sons of the Scottish Border Country. As one to whom the banks and braes afford only an occasional holiday resort and to whom the stabbing of the haggis and the draining of the quaich are foreign pastimes, I may send forth this passing tribute in no fear of being accused of vicariously patting myself on the back.

In the midst of this strangely wild and inaccessible country, of which only the outer fringe is touched by any railway system, let us land with the light wings of fancy on the flat heathery top of one of the highest of its hills on an early September morning. There is a light wind from the East; the sky is cloudless and over the distance lies the faint blue haze that always goes with a day of this type. It is very warm. As we lie dreamily on the heather after alighting, the view which meets the eye is one which no other country in the world can furnish. On every side, as far as the eye can reach, there is nothing to be seen but range upon range of round-topped hills varying from 1500 to 2000 feet in height. The nearer hills are streaked with mauve and green, where the heather fights with the bent grass for supremacy; the farther ones are a faint Prussian blue. Not a sign is there, in all that vast expanse over which the eye sweeps, of a tree or a human habitation. And yet one knows well enough that, out of sight, down in the invisible valleys, are woods galore and solid, prosperous-looking farmhouses, with all their proper accompaniment of oat-fields, root-fields, and grazing for their own cows. Being familiar with the country, one knows that these things are there, but their presence would never be suspected by the stranger suddenly dropped down upon our post of observation, nor would he readily believe in their existence, so absolutely void of life or habitation does this region of endless hills appear to be. To him it would seem that he was alone in a limitless world of rounded hill-tops, crowing grouse and bleating sheep. The sense of peace and aloofness is indescribable. Nowhere does a jarring note mar the beauty of earth or sky.

Such is the Border Country and in these peculiarities lies its fascination, equalling in its own particular way the fascination of the Highlands. But the difference is very striking. In the Highlands we have wide valleys, wide plains and great shimmering lakes backed up by jagged pointed mountains; rocks everywhere; heather, chiefly of the heath type, showing up here and there in brilliant patches between the rocks. In the Border Country, no rocks, no lakes, far narrower valleys, and hills, more or less of a uniform type, offering their flat tops and their precipitous sides as an eternal battlefield in the triangular fight between bent-grass, bracken and ling-heather. In Highland scenery, however beautiful, there is always a touch of melancholy. There is no suggestion of melancholy in the Border scenery. It is beautiful and peaceful, but not saddening.

However, let us rouse ourselves from the comatose conditions encouraged by the sun and the soft dry heather bed on which we are lying and commence a descent into the hidden world below. The flat, heathery hill-top runs round in a vast horse-shoe some mile in diameter. The inner side of the horse-shoe is very steep and is split by a number of "scaurs" down which small tricklets find their way to form the twisting, leaping burn that cuts its way down the bottom of the valley, till it disappears round the heathery shoulder which forms one end of the horse-shoe. We slither and scramble down the steep face, flushing many a grouse in doing so, till we reach the burn-side. Here the bracken is in distinct ascendency and into it our dogs (for no one ever walks the Border Hills without a dog) burrow their excited way, for bracken means rabbits. In their hunt they flush two or three blackgame before they are sternly recalled to their masters' heels. Round the intervening shoulder we pursue our downward course, but only to open up another stretch of valley, cut short as before by an obtruding shoulder from the hill-side. Beyond this shoulder, another twin burn comes careering down from a horse-shoe source of its own to join our burn, and together they make best speed for the valley below. Here and there little clumps of birch trees begin to dispute possession of the ground with the bracken and the heather and, presently—on rounding a bend in the valley—a mass of ash and oak wood with conifers interspersed gives us sudden warning of our approach to the homestead to which all the many miles of moorland over which we have travelled are attached. The homestead itself is of pink stone, turned grey or nearly grey by wind and weather. On the south side there will be a bright and trim garden in which phloxes and nasturtiums predominate. The outbuildings are many and substantial. If the farmer is about or if he spies us from his window, nothing will content him but that we must go in and be hospitably refreshed. As the day is hot and as it measures some five miles from the top of the horse-shoe from which we started to where we now stand, the farmer's pleading is not in vain and we follow him without reluctance into the dining-room with its solid mahogany sideboard. From the cupboard at one end of this a heavy cut-glass whisky decanter is now brought proudly forth, while the pretty daughter of the house enters with a big jug of milk and another of water which she places by its side and then shyly disappears. If the thirsty walker is wise, he will choose the water-jug in preference to the other, for milk in conjunction with good whisky is really a crime; and the whisky is very good. The Border farmer takes the same pride in his whisky as the millionaire does in his champagne and nothing but the very best obtainable will suit him. He is an admirable judge of what is the very best and he does not mind what he pays for it. The result is that, in a Border farmhouse, you get whisky such as the gods quaffed on Olympus, and if you make your escape from that farm-house without having drunk more of it than you intended when you entered, you are a man with abnormal powers of resistance to persuasion.

Having at length made your escape, after many hearty handshakes, you turn into the broad granite road that threads the bottom of the main valley. Fields of roots and oats fringe the road to right and left, and the river—now on one side and now on the other—is its intermittent companion till the foot of the valley is reached and other conditions obtain. On both sides rise occasional woods and beyond is the eternal rampart of heather-clad hills streaked with grass and bracken.

If any rash or untutored visitor from the South should have the imprudence to speak of this country as the "Lowlands" in the hearing of any of its residents, he will be politely but very promptly corrected. It is not the Lowlands; it is the Border Country—a very different affair, and a very superior affair in the opinion of those who live there and whose ancestors have lived there for many, many generations. The Borderers as a matter of fact are far more akin to the Highlanders than to the Lowlanders in their habits, although very widely different from them in character. In old days, every valley nursed its own particular clan with its acknowledged chieftain. There were no kilts and no tartans, but the bonds of clan-fellowship and the allegiance to the chief were just as strong as among any Camerons or McLeods. In this latter peculiarity indeed was to be found the ruling principle that governed men's lives, for, excepting to their own chieftains, they owned allegiance to none. For Kings and Queens, whether English or Scottish, they cared not a snap of the fingers; but, when the spurring rider with the smoking peat on his spear-head came galloping down Eskdale, Ewesdale or Teviotdale shouting "Rise for Branxholm," there was not a man nor even a lad who owned a horse but hurried to obey the summons. Branxholm Hall, which is still a fine and habitable residence, was then the main stronghold of the Scotts of Buccleuch and the residence of their chieftain Sir Walter Scott. For the name of their chieftain was always Sir Walter Scott. It never varied. And so, throughout the Border ballads, we invariably find Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch's eldest son figuring as "the Laird's Wat" and the second son as "the Laird's Jock." The reigning Scott of Buccleuch, by virtue of his position as super-chief of the Borders, was always Warden of the Middle Marches on the Scottish side, so that, in time, this became almost a hereditary right investing him with the suzerainty of the entire district known as the Middle Marches, which is really the Border Country proper. A Warden of the Marches, in Elizabethan days, would seem to have occupied a position very similar in respect of the responsibilities and dangers attached to it to that occupied fifty years ago by the Sheriff of some wild lawless district in the Western States of

America. He had practically unrestricted power of life and death over the country in which he stood for the law, but he was also under obligation to undertake any adventure—no matter how perilous—in the interests of Border justice and as a means of obtaining rough and ready redress for injuries received by any of his aggrieved subjects. Scott of Buccleuch, therefore, through these extended powers, became, in a sense, the acknowledged chieftain not only of his own clan, the Scotts, but also of the Armstrongs, the Elliots and Nixons of Liddesdale; the Turnbulls, Crosiers and Hoppringles of Teviotdale; the Pattersons and Littles of Ewesdale and the Moffats and Beatties of Eskdale. To the East, the Kerrs and Homes were in perpetual feud with the Scotts of Buccleuch, but to the West, in Nithsdale and Annandale, the Maxwells, Johnstones and Jardines were too much engaged in their own family quarrels to take any active part in the doings of the Middle Marches.

The feud of the Scotts with the Kerrs dates back to 1526. In that year King James V had to make an official visit to Jedburgh in order to be present at the periodical assizes held in that town. The young King was practically kept a prisoner by his father in-law, the Earl of Angus, and, having little liking for the thrall in which he was held, and feeling a reasonable desire to reign on his own account, he sent a secret message to Sir Walter Scott asking him to waylay the party on their return from Jedburgh and release him out of the hands of his tyrannous father-in-law. Buccleuch promptly responded. He raised six hundred spears of Liddesdale and (the book says) Annandale; but this should probably read Teviotdale; and, with this force behind him, waylaid Angus's party at Melrose, where a desperate encounter took place.

Buccleuch's men appear to have had the worst of it and were forced to retreat, but not before they had killed Sir Andrew Kerr of Ferniehurst and eighty others. The result was a deadly feud between the houses of Scott and Kerr which was not in any way softened when, twenty-seven years later, the Kerrs, in revenge, murdered Sir Walter Scott in the streets of Edinburgh. Attempts were made, after this, to patch up the quarrel by means of a family inter-marriage, but the success of this manœuvre was only partial and, for many years to come, the two families continued to view one another with repugnance.

The Kerrs, however, belonged, strictly speaking, to the Eastern Marches and it was to Scott of Buccleuch, at Branxholm, that the Borderers of the Middle Marches had almost invariably to look for redress from any incursions on the part of the English and, from all available records, it would seem that the appeal was never made in vain. In the ballad "Jamie Telfer of the fair Dodhead" we are given a graphic picture of the course of Border justice in the sixteenth century. Telfer's home, known as the Dodhead, had been raided and harried by a party of the English under Humphrey Musgrave, commonly known as the Captain of Bewcastle and—following the invariable usage of the land—he and his two sons rode to Branxholm to lay their complaint before the Warden and claim his immediate intervention on their behalf. The rest of the story is told in the ballad.

"And when they come to Branxholm Ha'
They shouted a' baith loud and hie,
Till up and spak him auld Buccleuch,*
Said 'Wha's this brings the fray to me?'

---

* Walter, Second Earl of Buccleuch.

"'It's I, Jamie Telfer o' the fair Dodhead,
And a harried man I wot I be.
There's naught left i' the fair Dodhead
But a greeting wife and bairnies three.'

"'Alack for wae!' quoth the guid auld lord,
'And ever my heart is wae for thee,
But fye, gae cry on Willie, my son,
And see that he comes to me speedilie.

"'Gae warn the water braid and wide,
Gae warn it sune and hastilie,
They that winna ride for Telfer's kie
Let them never look i' the face of me.

"'Warn Wat o' Harden and his sons,
Wi' them will Borthwick water ride,
Warn Gaudilands and Allanhaugh
And Gilmanscleuch and Commonside.

"'Ride by the gate o' Priesthaughswire
And warn the Currors o' the Lea;
As ye come down the Hermitage Slack
Warn doughty Willie o' Gorinberry.'

"The Scotts they rode, the Scotts they ran
Sae starkly and sae steadilie
And aye the ower-word o' the thrang
Was 'Rise for Branxholm readilie!'"

The ballad, which is of considerable length, goes on to describe how the Scots rode into England and brought back Jamie Telfer's cattle, but not without a fight in which the Laird's Willie and some others were killed and the Captain of Bewcastle himself was very severely wounded.

There were occasions, it was whispered, when Scott of Buccleuch or one of his sons would ride into England even when no "fray" had been brought to him, but when the flocks and herds on his own meadows were getting low. In the ballad of the "Outlaw Murray" James IV is represented as saying:—

> " Now haud thy tongue, Sir Walter Scott,
> Nor speak of reif nor felonie,
> For had every honest man his ain kye
> A richt puir clan thy name wad be."

Sometimes it happened, when Scott of Buccleuch and his Border riders clattered off towards the English March, that there were graver matters afoot than the mere recovery of stolen cattle. When Kinmont Willie, an enthusiastic collector of English horses and cattle, was captured by Lord Scroop, the English Warden, and shut up in Carlisle Castle preparatory to execution, young Scott of Buccleuch, on being informed of the catastrophe, swept down on the place with a hastily raised band of eighty men, broke into the castle and carried off the prisoner under the very nose of the English Warden, thereby gaining for himself and his descendants the immortal title of "the bauld Buccleuch." Some five and twenty years ago, feeling in lyrical mood, and in the belief that this subject was worthy of rather more elaboration than fell to its share in the pithy Border ballad entitled "Kinmont Willie," I perpetrated an Ingoldsbean lay on the subject which is here submitted for the perusal or—if preferred—for the avoidance of those who, having indulgently accompanied the author to this advanced post in his retrospective excursions, are now anxious to learn the exact and, so far, buried-in-State-secrecy details of the various combinations of circumstances which resulted in the rescue of Kinmont Willie from Carlisle Castle.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RAID OF CARLISLE

Lord Scroop sits square in his velvet chair
And smacks his lips at the goodly fare
That lacqueys and liveried grooms of State
Are heaping in piles on his lordly plate.
Ris d'agneau and *filet de veau*
With porpoise and peacock and sturgeon's roe,
And separate sauces for each of the courses
And flagons of Rhenish and rare Bordeaux;
I doubt if the Queen had a finer cuisine
Or a board at which choicer provisions were seen
Than boasted the Warden in merry Carlisle
When it suited his humour to do it in style.

Now my Lord of Scroop had finished his soup
And his *éperlans frits*, and had called for a stoup
Of the Château Lafitte, which he drank with his
meat,
For the Malmsey, though old, was a little too sweet.
When battered and spattered and flecked with mud,
With here and there a suspicion of blood
Staining his hauberk of burnished steel,
Sakelde breaks in on the Warden's meal,
Sakelde the chief of the mounted bands
That ride at my lord of Scroop's commands.
" What news? What news, my Deputy bold?
Whatever it is, it had best be told,
So fire away, and say your say
For a *ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles.*
And there's nothing I know that annoys one so,
As having to eat my *filet de veau*

And *haricots verts* while you stand and stare
Like an image in front of my velvet chair."

Now I'd better explain, while I'm still in the vein,
That towards the end of Elizabeth's reign,
Though the Thistle and Rose were no longer at blows,
They'd a way of disturbing each other's repose
By the lifting of stock at all hours of the clock,
And by setting a-crowing the " bonny red cock."
A mode of proceeding most clearly exceeding
The rules of decorum and palpably needing
Some clear understanding between the two nations
By which to adjust their unhappy relations.
With this object in view it occurred to Buccleuch
That a great deal of mutual good would accrue
If they settled that he and Lord Scroop's nominee
Should meet once a year and between them agree
To arbitrate all controversial cases
And grant an award on an equal basis,
A brilliant idea which promised to be a
Corrective, if not a complete panacea.
For though many critics have tried to condemn it, his
Scheme was prolific in solid indemnities,
Cattle and sheep and occasional marks
Being paid to the victims of some of the " larks "
With which the young bloods when inclined for a spree
Had a way of relieving their days of *ennui*.
And it really appears that for several years
These fines of poll'd Angus and Galloway steers
Did greatly conduce during seasons of truce
To abating traditional forms of abuse,
And to giving the *roués* of Border Society
Some little sense of domestic propriety.

Now the point is this, that whenever they met
In these open-air courts to express their regret

For these little *faux pas* and to pay the full debt
For such peccadilloes, the strict etiquette
Observed on each side when a case had been tried
And the Wardens were able at length to decide
On a suitable fine, was that all who'd attended,
No matter how deeply they might have offended,
No matter what claims on behalf of King James
Might be entered against their particular names,
Should have a day's grace when they rode from the place,
And in spite of all feuds of religion and race
They should not be molested for former transgressions
Till sunrise the morning succeeding the sessions.

Now Sakelde, at the time that he made his appearance,
Had just ridden back with some fifty adherents
From taking his seat at this annual Board on
Behalf, for the nonce, of his master the Warden.
So without more ado he most pawkily drew
A description, if full from his own point of view,
Of fires and slaughters in various quarters
And seizures of wives and abductions of daughters,
And of what compensations for such violations
The Court had awarded the ladies' relations,
And so on *ad lib.* with his tale of misdoings
And forcible wooings and consequent suings,
Till lastly his Lord, who was woefully bored
By this dreary recital of fire and sword,
Resolved that his temper no longer could brook it
And bluntly requested the other to hook it.

The Deputy winked, and adjusting a smile
Which conveyed a suggestion of infinite guile,
Remarked : " It is possibly worthy of mention
That down in the lock-up I hold in detention

One Willie of Kinmont, a thief of degree,
That we happened to collar at Woodhouselee."
Lord Scroop has leapt from his velvet chair.
Hey! but his face was a sight to see.
So woundily sly was the bibulous eye
That he winked at his wicked old Deputy.

"Now drain me a stoup, thou warrior bold,
  Now drain me a stoup of Malvoisie,
And the weight of thy bonnet in bright red gold
  Thy guerdon to-night, Sakelde, shall be.
For that any retainer of Scott of Buccleuch
  Should be waiting his capital doom to thole
Is the merriest news that a man could choose
  To gladden the Western Warden's soul.
Where are those grooms? Here, Halliday, Dick,
Go fetch me this cateran reiver, quick.
I'll have a few words with the gentleman ere he be
Launched on his heaven-ward trip from the Hairibee.
Zounds! what a capture! a fig for indentures
And treaties; I don't care a button who censures
My act. Why a man of such low avocations
Is outside the pale of polite obligations.
As big a marauder, in fact, as the Border
Has ever produced for the spread of disorder.
There's no one I'd sooner have bagged, *Mon dieu!*
'Twill be one in the eye for the bold Buccleuch.
Ha! enter our reiver; by all the Saints!
'Tis a figure and face such as Gheeraedts paints.
'So, Willie of Kinmont, you're brought at last
To account to the Queen for your evil past,
For robbing and thieving and raiding and reiving
Her Majesty's people and rudely relieving
Respectable folks of their daughters and wives,
Their cattle, their horses and even their lives.

And for such misdemeanours, on Monday at eight
Or soon after, you'll cancel your debt to the State,
For your vertebral cord will be asked to afford
A support for the whole of your bodily weight;
A trial to which as you'll learn by the sequel
The vertebral cord does not often prove equal.
So, if you can show me no adequate cause
For reversing the usual course of the laws,
I must ask you to leave me to finish in peace
My *omelette au fromage* and *œufs à la suisse.*'"

Oh, Kinmont Willie was mighty of limb,
And his body was stark and his eye was grim,
And I fancy that then there were very few men,
From the mouth of the Annan to Ettrick Pen
Who in battle or brawl would have ventured to call
On the sturdy marauder to wrestle a fall,
Or settle conclusions by means of a cuff
Without, what the faculty call, "getting snuff."
Still he did not possess, I am bound to confess,
Any super-abundance of courtly address,
And though full of resource as a leader of horse
Was a regular duffer at wordy finesse;
For, unlike Mr. Carroll's somnambulant Alice, his
Mind was not given to subtle analysis.
And except in the case of his regular trade
Of levying cattle or heading a raid,
The bent of his mind was so strictly confined
To affairs appertaining to stock, I'm afraid
There is hardly a doubt that at revel or rout
The ladies considered him rather a lout.
So, finding himself so to speak up a tree,
And unable to think of a neat repartee,
He wisely concluded (as Brian Boru did,
On seeing his "illigant country denuded"
Of cattle and grain that were swept from the plain
By the barbarous hand of the pillaging Dane)

To bandy no words with a dominant foe
But to wait for a chance of returning the blow,
And thus let him have it *in more suo.*
So he merely replied with excusable pride
That to Harden and Stobbs he was closely allied,
And that if he were hanged in this summary way
There would soon in Carlisle be the devil to pay.
" Don't flatter yourself, my astute buccaneer,"
The old Warden replied with sinister sneer.

There's a little lad saddles a Galloway steed
And straight to the norrard he gallops at speed.
Though the day's getting late, it's a quarter to
eight,
And the Esk's in a regular deuce of a spate,
He don't care a jot if its flooded or not,
But checking his pace to an orderly trot
Goes slap at the river, and ere you can wink
He has driven his Galloway over the brink.
Now Heaven them guide, 'tis a desperate ride,
For the river is swift and uncommonly wide,
But they struggle at length to the opposite side.
Then the stout little lad gives a twist to his plaid
And he stands in his stirrups and gallops like mad,
And he gallops and gallops o'er Canobie Moss
And he's into the Liddle and out and across,
With a splash and a scramble, a shake and a snort,
As if pony and boy were enjoying the sport.
Then *ventre à terre* they gallop from there
In a way that would really have made you stare,
Till at Penton Linns his pony begins
To sob very sadly, and just at the whins
Below Mangertom Castle he staggers and reels
And projects our little boy head over heels.

But though minus his hat this adventurous brat
Gives a holloa to Willie of Westburnflat,

And *al illo latrone* he borrows a pony
And rides it as hard as he'd ridden his own; he
Is on to its back with a whoop and a whack
And he's over the water to Hermitage Slack,
And the Nine Stane Rig, and on Sundihope Flow
Gallops hammer and tongs, though it puzzles me
how
In a very poor light in the dead of the night
On a broken-kneed pony this venturesome wight
Could have managed to do it, for even now
It is pretty bad going on Sundhope Flow,
And if you're inclined to pooh-pooh and deny it,
Just borrow a Galloway pony and try it.

But little Jock Graeme (which I think was his
name)
Doesn't care a grey groat if his pony is lame,
But he gives him to know it's a question of go
When the cry of the rider's " For Branxholm Ho ! "
His wind must be sound and his paces be true
Who carries the fray to the bauld Buccleuch.
So the good little nag doesn't potter or lag,
Though he falls on his head in a treacherous
" Hagg,"
Which shows that his legs, like the moods of Poseidon,
Are not at a pinch to be wholly relied on.
However, no matter, they're nothing the worse,
Though Jock's observations are pithy and terse,
And one word at least sounded very like—Come
With regard to that word I had better be mum,
For fond as I am of a neat epigram
I can never approve of small boys saying—Dear !
Once more I was very near writing that swear.
Nevertheless, I am bound to confess
That his toilette was all in a terrible mess;
For taking a toss in a glutinous moss
Has a most unbecoming effect on the dress,

And very few things are as black as the slough
That lies in the hollows of Sundhope Flow.

This little digression on Jockie's expression
Has checked the monotonous flow of progression
That brought us so quickly from Canobie Lea
To the spot where the boy had a fall and, *on dit*,
Was repeatedly heard by a bad little bird
To make use of a word that began with a "D."
So *en route* once more and *excelsior*,
For the hill-side's steep and its half-past four,
And you'll both of you tire and puff and perspire
Before you are over the Hardhaughswire.

But the good little steed though it is broken-kneed
Has the courage and grit of the Galloway breed,
For though you'd imagine the mountain would tire
it,
Really it seems as if *vires acquirit*
Eundo, so great is the spirit and will
With which it goes galloping over the hill.
Well, be that as it may, they were over the brae
In a couple of cracks and below them there lay,
In the light of the dawn so uncertain and pale,
The somnolent valley of Teviotdale.
Then he tightens his reins and he chances a fall,
And he gallops like blazes for Branxholm Hall.

"What news, ma smatchet? What news from
hame?
What speirings o' Canobie, wee Jock Graeme?
There's bluid on your spur and there's mud in your
e'e,
And I doubt there's a rumpus at Woodhouselee,
Or what the deuce in a time of truce
Do you mean by bringing the fray to me?"

"Oh! a wife sits pale and the children wail
And sair is the greeting in Liddesdale,

For Willie o' Kinmont's ta'en and held
By yon fausse dinnaguid Tom Sakelde,
And Liddesdale lippens to Branxholm Hall
To red him some gate frae the Warden's thrall.
For the morn at noon they'll gar him 'gae doun'
As sure as Sakelde's a twa-faced loon,
So there, Buccleuch, ye ken the noo
Why Liddesdale sends the fray to you."

"Hech wow! wee Jockie, wae's me, wae's me,
For the news that you carry from Woodhouselee,
And gif there were war wi' the Queen, my sakes!
But I'd give that auld limmer Sakelde his paiks,
And fause Carlisle's bricks, mortar and tiles
I'd scatter abroad for a score o' miles,
That ilka fleggin went stravaiging by
Should gather the tale of its infamy.
For of all the devices for quelling disorders
And checking the Cumberland thieves and marauders,
The sweetest I own is the *lex talionis*,
The only canonical law of the Borders.
Still, as there's a truce wi' the English Queen
It wouldna just do; still I vow there's been
Quite *satis superque* of this sort of work, we
Must really take action and intervene.
Eh, mon! I have it. Ho, Wat! What ho!
Archie Gillespie, Jamie and Joe,
Get ye to horse, ye loons, and choose
Me some fourscore riders of Esk and Ewes.
Ma certie! I'll gie 'em to understand
Who's cock o' the walk in the Borderland."

There's a clatter of horses on Woodhouselee,
There's a glitter of helmets at Canobie,
As from forest and fen and from corrie and glen
The men of the Esk "rise readilie."

From Sorby Hass, from Logan Head
Where the rush of the Tarras is dark and red,
With hauberk and jack, with spur and boot,
Sniffing afar the scent of loot,
They gallop to Sark all ripe for a lark,
But still in the dark as to what's afoot.
" Now wha's for a ride at my right hand,
Wha's for a glimpse of Cumberland.
Will ye tak' a bit turn o'er the Glenzier burn,
For a whiff o' the sea on Solway Sand ?

" There's a corbie's nest on Eden's shore,
A corbie's nest baith high and strang,
So bring ye a score of ropes or more,
And plenty o' ladders light and lang.
For the corbie has stolen a wee bit lamb,
A lamb we can ill afford to lose.
So against his eyrie we'll bring a ' ram,'
And to back the ' ram ' we'll bring the Ewes.
So bide you here till the nicht draws near,
And when the guid ponies have had a rest,
Manibus pedibusque, as soon as its dusk we
Will up and awa for the corbie's nest."

Lord Scroop sits square in his velvet chair
And smacks his lips at the goodly fare
That lacqueys and liveried grooms of State
Are heaping in piles on his lordly plate.
Oh ! he's full of *esprit* and of Malvoisie,
And he chuckles aloud in his vinous glee,
And the opposite place at the board is held
By the Deputy Warden, Tom Sakelde.

" A toast ! a toast ! my Deputy stout.
A toast ! a toast ! What ho ! without,
More wine, more wine, you lubberly swine,
Bring a couple of quarts of the 'fifty-nine.

We'll drink it between us, my worthy Silenus.
What! hang it, old fellow, you can't decline!
Here's a speedy release *e vinculo*
To our mutual friend who lives below,
The one in the cell, not the one in—well,
You know what I mean of course. Hallo!
The deuce! What's that? Cries, trumpets, shouts!
Here, Robert and John, you rascal louts,
Go, say that I really can't allow,
Those fellows to make such a fiendish row."

"My lord, my lord, the castle's ta'en,
The garrison's fled and the sentries slain,
And Scott of Buccleuch with his cut-throat crew
Are sacking the castle through and through.
They've burst the gate; they've broken the wall,
They're playing the deuce in the servants' hall,
They're smashing the doors and the dungeon floors
And letting the prisoners out by scores,
And the guard are killed, not one escaped,
And the women, I fear, have all been run
To ground in the outer Barbican."

Now, Lord Scroop (his biographers all declare)
Was a man with a good deal of *savoir faire*,
And in any emergency, great or small,
In plot or intrigue, in battle or brawl,
Whenever, in fact, he'd occasion to act
In a matter requiring courage and tact,
He was able to keep what Macaulay defined
As a gift from the gods—viz. his presence of mind.
In short, at that time there were certainly few men
Possessed of the Warden's excessive acumen.
Now, this being so you will see that although
Such news couldn't fail to be rather a blow,

Lord Scroop was by no means *au bout de son Latin*
In spite of the wine and the *choux-fleur au gratin*,
And the *entrées* and *rots* which a chef often hides
Under pseudonyms borrowed from France and, besides
Other things on which only the opposite sex are keen,
Ices and cream which he'd eaten κατ᾽ ἐξοχήν,
Spite of all this it is perfectly plain
That the food hadn't addled the cells of his brain.

He has dragged Sakelde from his velvet chair,
He has hustled the Deputy down the stair,
He has bundled him out of the buttery lattice
Although the poor gentleman's middle so fat is.
It's rather a job, for his person is large in
Proportion and leaves but a limited margin
Through which he can squeeze with his fat little knees
Tucked up to the neck of his dainty *chemise*
Of Valenciennes rare; for of course you're aware
That the windows we use for admission of air,
In old architecture were used to protect your
Abode from all folks who'd no business there.
And were rather designed so that men with a mind
To burglary, murder and rapine inclined
Should fail to get in, than that people with stout
And protuberant middles should try to get out.
However at last he is actually past,
Although for a minute inclined to stick fast,
For the curves of his figure were sensibly bigger
Since sharing the Warden's Homeric repast.
Then he bends his ear the better to hear
While the Warden unravels his *ruse de guerre*,
With the which, if the Deputy's decently smart, he
Expects to astonish the opposite party.

There's a terrible hubbub inside the keep,
There's a pretty to do where the damsels sleep,
Such laughing and squealing,
Such frantic appealing,
Such running about and unseemly revealing
Of figures accoutred in scant deshabille,
And of limbs unencumbered by things with a frill.
Such a general hubbub of voices and tears
Had never been known for a hundred years.

At length there's an end to the racket and riot,
The reivers are off and the Barbican quiet,
And I'm sorry to say, they're no sooner away
Than out of the fodder and out of the hay,
Out of the cupboards and out of the sinks,
And other such places where nobody thinks
To look for a soldier in arms, there creep,
Palsied and pale to the foot of the keep,
The whole of the garrison, sentries and guard,
Who were said to have fallen in fight in the yard.
Not a soldier was lost, not a sentry was missing,
No bloodshed whatever, and as to the kissing
The ladies distinctly aver that, although
They were slightly alarmed at the sight of the foe,
They must nevertheless, as in honour confess
That the visitors' manners were quite *comme il faut.*
In fact it would tax them to specify when
They had met such unusually sociable men.

Meanwhile, through the wind and the mist and the rain
The marauders are off to the Border again.
With carol and song they are jogging along
Down the road to the river, as merry a throng
As ever rode out from the gates of Newbattle
To ease a Northumberland farm of its cattle.

And right in their midst, on a muscular bay,
Which he sits in the loose irresponsible way
Of a caravan gipsy when thoroughly tipsy,
Rides *pecorum fer celeberrimus ipse,*
Young Willie o' Kinmont, in no little glee
At the thought of revisiting Canobie Lea.

They have passed the Caday, and are breasting the ridge
That you cross just before you arrive at the bridge,
With that devil-may-care sort of rollicking air
Such as even irregular cavalry wear.
And old Dickie o' Dryhope is singing a stave
About beautiful ladies and men who are brave,
An equivocal carol asserting that men are all
Lovers of feminine beauty in general,
Praising, however, *imprimis* the charms
Of a maid with such elegant figure and arms
It was hard to discriminate which was the better, her
Arms or her neck, or *et cetera*, *et cetera.*
And as to her face it reflected such grace
That whenever it offered a chance to embrace,
He was sure not to miss it but hastened to kiss it
(I think I had better not be *too* explicit,
For some of the words that occurred in the chorus
Are not in the index of any *thesaurus*).
However, no matter, he sang with a will
And they all of them joined in the chorus until
They were over the ridge and in sight of the bridge,
And he'd started to sing an elaborate trill,
Just the sort of cadenza that usually ends a
Cantata by Paolo Tosti or Denza,
When just as he got to the critical note
It wavered and quavered and stuck in his throat.

For rank upon rank of the garrison flank
The approach to the bridge from the wall to the bank,

And the Warden, in order to harass the rear
Of the Borderers, hovers unpleasantly near
With his cavalry, while to give strength to his front he
Has placed all his cannon *in medio ponte*,
And merrily, merrily laughs Lord Scroop
At the plight of that poor little hapless troop.
He has hemmed them around upon every side,
He has driven them down to the riotous tide
Where the Eden, the colour of strong Bohea,
Goes rushing along to the Irish Sea.
Oh! placid and pure as an infant's dream
Or the soul inviolate
Is the silvery flow of Eden's stream
By the braes of Armathwaite.
But turgid and flushed with an evil gleam
By the braes of Armathwaite
Is the riotous flow of Eden's stream
When the river's in angry "spate."
And as to this one particular night
It was really a very remarkable sight,
Such a vortex of eddies from shore to shore
Had seldom if ever been seen before.
Such swishing and swirling, such twisting and twirling
Of ashes and elms that the river was whirling
In dozens and scores to the sea. I expect a
Few hundred at least of such *membra disjecta*
Must almost have passed in the space of a minute,
Such masses of timber appeared to be in it.
And then such a size! I am quite at a loss
To describe to a yard what the width was across,
But I'm sure you'll believe (for I never embroider)
'Twas fully as wide as the Boyne is at Drogheda.
I doubt if Leander, that spoony young gander
Of classical history'd have cared to philander,
Or swim to his bride through that riotous tide,
Though a Hero's reward lay the opposite side.

Lord Scroop gallops down like a wolf on the fold,
And he chuckles to think how Sir Walter is sold,
And he stands in his stirrups and shouts to the raiders
To yield them as traitors and spies and invaders.
Never a word said Sir Walter Scott,
But his brow was uncommonly stern, I wot,
As the Warden and Co. he requested to go
To a region below that is said to be hot.
He has forced his horse at the ominous gleam
That glints from the face of that awful stream,
And he spurs at the waste of unlimited water
That foams like a torrent of Guinness's porter,
With a "Branxholm Ho!" and before you can sneeze
A la Curtius he plunges *in medias res*,
And close in the wake of his leader there rides
"Auld Wat" of Harden and Commonsides,
And after them blobs Gibbie Elliot of Stobbs
And the Slitterick lads on their Galloway cobs,
Then the others *en suite*, it was really a treat
To see them go in, for I needn't repeat
That the Eden in flood is by no means inviting
For people to swim in, though salmon and "Whiting"
Undoubtedly find it refreshing and cool
And a *chemin de luxe* to this favourite pool.
However, for horses and soldiers in arms
The danger predominates over the charms,
For you mustn't suppose it's all *couleur de rose*
When the water comes gurgling up to your nose,
And by twos and by threes big unmannerly trees
Come and batter your chest and your elbows and knees,
And your buffeted head is sucked under by eddies,
A thing which in medical essays I've read is
A cause of asphyxia—*surtout* if you mix your
Intestines with much of Sir Wilfred's elixir.

And when the said river is running an easy eight
Miles by the hour, I hope you'll appreciate
All that it meant for Buccleuch and his reivers
To take to the flood like a pack of retrievers.

As an elderly hen in a Cambridgeshire fen
Stands and clucks in pathetic embarrassment when
All her web-footed fosterlings take to the waters
And leave her bemoaning the loss of her daughters,
Well, *haud aliter*, as Æneas would say,
Was the face of the Warden at losing his prey,
And as horses and riders *in tenebras* splashed
He observed to the Deputy, " Well, I am dashed!
But for all the money a man could name,
That mind could fashion or fancy frame,
I'd see myself cussed before I'd entrust
My form to that cataract's angry lust."
Then swift as the wind there occurred to his mind
An idea that the reader no doubt has divined,
That by crossing the ridge and the Stoniebank bridge
He might fall on the enemy's forces behind.
(You will notice, of course, how that, time after time,
I am driven to use this identical rhyme,
And whenever I've shown a *Dramatis persona*
Engaged on the service of Madame Bellona,
Approaching—from any direction—the bridge,
It's a hundred to one this ubiquitous ridge
Will immediately rise in the warrior's way,
As though some upheaval of littoral clay
Had caused a formation that changed its location
And wandered about in the course of the day.
But, as the word " midge " and this volatile " ridge"
Are the only two rhymes in the language to bridge,
And as " midge " is out of the question of course I am
Bound to make use of the other *ad nauseam.*)

'Tis done—like an arrow that flies from a bow
He has galloped across to demolish the foe;
But though his bay jennet is famed for its speed,
And though all the cavalry follow his lead,
Before they had time to deploy into line
And enable the sections in rear to combine
In the movement by taking the proper incline,
Which I hardly need say was the Warden's design,
Though destined to prove a protracted manœuvre,
The bridge being exceedingly narrow—in fine
Before even half of this force of Lord Scroop's
Had had time to do more than get formed into
troops,
And to make a perfunctory feeble attack,
All the Scots were across, and without looking
back,
Tam marte quam arte the whole of the party
Got safely away to the Hermitage Slack,
And Debateable Lands; not a man of their
bands
But escaped from the Warden's unmannerly hands.
Though one or two bodies were afterwards found
On the sands at the head of the Solway Sound,
And from this I expect the report was correct
Which suggested that some of the reivers were
wrecked
In attempting to cross, but, whatever their loss,
It could never be properly said to affect
The *succès fou* of the bold Buccleuch
In carrying out his historical *coup*.

And from that day forth and for many a year
Any soldier or citizen, peasant or peer,
Who was seeking a boon at the Warden's hand—
Some " Castle appointment " or grant of land,
Or a nice little berth under Government, worth
Say a hundred a year, or perhaps the command

In a punitive foray of fire and sword, an
Expedient greatly in vogue with the Warden,
Whenever, in short, any person at Court,
With a view to acquiring more than he ought
In the matter of "office," would frame a petition
Inviting the Warden to view the position
And see that his claims and his laudable aims
Were requited with some little State recognition—
If any such man would achieve a success
And inveigle Lord Thomas of Scroop to say "Yes,"
Quite the very worst thing he could possibly do
Was to mention the name of the bold Buccleuch.

CHAPTER XX

AFTER-YEARS

SOME 320 years after the raid of Carlisle above described, I was sitting with the Laird's Wat and the Laird's Jock and three others on a heathery eminence overlooking the one-time turbulent valley of Liddesdale, from which old Sim Armstrong of Whithaugh, the most daring and dangerous reiver on the Border, used to set out on his predatory raids into England. There was no suggestion of violence in the scene upon which we sat looking down—wide stretches of moorland shelving down to where the course of the unseen Liddle was marked by the tops of fir-clumps, from among which an occasional column of smoke, rising straight up into the still air, spoke of a hidden farmstead down by the water. It was all inexpressibly peaceful, and yet the scene before us must have been identical in almost every detail with that on which old Martin Elliot of Braidlie, the Elizabethan tenant of the farm on which we were eating our luncheon in the interval of a grouse-drive, would have looked had he sat, 320 years ago, where we were then sitting. The clumps of wood down by the water would then have been oak and birch instead of larch and spruce-fir, as they are now, but otherwise there would be no difference. We were in fact seated—with game-bags intervening—on that very same Sundhope Flow across which little Jock Graeme galloped so sturdily when bringing the fray to Buccleuch at Branxholm Hall. Down below us lay the Hermitage

Slack and the Nine Stane Rig and, behind our left shoulders, rose the mighty barrier of the Hardhaughswire over which Mary Queen of Scots (in actual fact) made her way when fleeing her pursuers, and the passage of which little Jock Graeme (in fiction) found comparatively easy, as fictional heroes generally do find such obstacles.

Mary Stuart, in undertaking her historical ride over the great boggy, peaty, almost unrideable watershed between Teviotdale and Liddesdale was making, as all the world knows, for the shelter of Hermitage Castle and the protection of Bothwell against those who were hunting her to destruction; and a turn of the head—as we sit eating our sheepshead pie and quaffing the wine of the country—carries us back to the days of the poor persecuted Queen with a jerk so startling as to be almost uncanny. For there, close at hand, and rearing its great bulk unexpectedly out of the bleak moor, without any note of warning or sign of latter-day civilization, are the four solid square walls of Hermitage Castle, looking, I imagine, exactly as they looked when Mary Stuart rode up to the gateway fainting and exhausted after her desperate ride across the mountains. In the appearance of the four walls there is nothing to suggest that all this might not have happened yesterday. I know no ruin which is so impressive as Hermitage Castle—impressive in its splendid isolation and in the curious suggestion of habitability which it carries in its massive substantial walls. There is not a house within sight of it. There are no spiked railings, notice-boards, watchman's house, toll-gate or other tourist-scaring abominations of the sort to vulgarise it and modernise it and bring it down to the level of ordinary shilling-for-admittance ruins. The place is, of course, technically a ruin, and internally it is literally a ruin, but it had neither the appearance nor the common characteristics of a ruin. There is no symptom of decay about its huge shell, which looks as if it might, at any moment, pour forth from the great doorway a troop of Border riders with their leather jackets, their steel caps and their faces set southward.

Fascinating, however, as the spectacle of Hermitage Castle is to the stranger, it is too familiar an object to have any special interest for the Laird's Wat or the Laird's Jock, whose aim at the moment is the collection of grouse and not the collection of cattle, which—according to libellous local rumours—was an occasional hobby with some of their ancestors. Having, therefore, collected as many of these as circumstances have permitted of, the party makes its way up the Hermitage Water to the farmstead of Gorinberry—the self-same Gorinberry named in the ballad "o' the fair Dodhead"—and, having there plentifully refreshed the inner man, we climb into the red-postillioned brake which waits outside and so make our way down Ewesdale to Langholm Lodge, on the door-step of which stands the bold Buccleuch himself, drawn thither by the distant "click-clack" of the horses' hoofs upon the blue-granite road. And as the Laird's Wat pours into his ear our eager tale of spoil brought from Liddesdale, he smiles well pleased, even as the "guid auld lord" must have smiled some three centuries before when he learned that Telfer's stolen cattle had been recovered from across the English Border and—going fifty years further back—as the "guid auld lord's" father must have smiled when he and Kinmont Willie sat down to supper after the latter's gyves had been knocked off.

THE END

DA Hamilton, Lord Ernest
565 William
H18A32 Old days and new
1923

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

UTL AT DOWNSVIEW
D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C
39 14 23 11 04 005 4